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Official Records

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Tuesday, 30 September 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rakhmonov (*spoke in Russian*): Exactly 10 years ago today, the Head of Tajikistan addressed world leaders for the first time from the high rostrum of the General Assembly. At that moment, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, our country was taking its first steps as an equal member of the community of nations.

The establishment of Tajikistan as a modern, democratic, secular State coincided with the emergence of the need to search for our own ways of interacting efficiently in a rapidly changing world. Against the background of the inter-Tajik conflict, we had but little time to find effective methods of dealing with the huge political, social and economic problems of the transitional period.

Today, full of pride in the peace-loving, industrious and talented people of Tajikistan, I am able report to the representatives of the world's countries that we have emerged with dignity from the toughest trial that has ever befallen our nation. It stands to reason that Tajikistan, its people and its statehood were able to withstand that trial largely thanks to support of the international community. The United States, Russia, China, Japan, India and Iran, the European Union and Central Asia States and many other countries, large and small, supported the young Tajik State during that dramatic period of our history. The United Nations played a special role in this process. Tajikistan greatly appreciates this support, and is striving in turn to be a responsible member of the international community.

A decade may not be sufficient time to take full stock of progress made on an international or national scale. However, trying to understand the lessons of the multifaceted and dramatic events at the turn of this century could be very useful to our common quest to make lasting improvements to the world order.

For Tajikistan, the main lesson to be drawn is clear: the future lies with democracy within sovereign State borders and with the democratization of international political and economic relations. The lesson to be drawn is that establishing a democratic society is in many ways the same for all countries, but each case is also unique. Our own experience has shown that today there are no countries or peoples unwilling to accept democracy or unprepared for it.

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The peoples of Asia cherish the same values as the peoples of Europe, America or Africa.

It is also obvious that specific conditions, and each nation's historical heritage and cultural traditions, clearly influence the pace and form of the democratic processes in each country. This issue was thoroughly discussed at the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies that was recently held in Mongolia. We believe that its outcome will give a fresh impetus to democratic processes everywhere, including Asia.

Establishing a democracy should not be considered as being easy to achieve, but rather as an extremely complex step-by-step process. In this sense, the experience of developed democracies is indeed invaluable. Nevertheless, even they are still struggling to strike an optimal balance between the interests of the State and the individual and resolve the question of how to meet the basic needs of their citizens while respecting the primacy of the right to private property in a market economy.

The people of Tajikistan won their independence and democracy through enormous suffering and hardship. Peace prevailed in our country only when we recognized that national accord should prevail over political ambitions and military confrontation, as the highest goal of society, united not only by common efforts to survive but also by a strong faith in its creative capacity.

The brightest prospects for Tajikistan lie in a vision of a future developed democracy and prospering secular State, bolstered by a strong civil society. During his visit to Tajikistan last year, Mr. Kofi Annan could see the tangible outcome of the United Nations peacekeeping activities and striking change in the mood of the people, who now have hope for the future of their children and their country.

We are convinced that the democratic processes in Tajikistan will gain momentum. We have all the prerequisites for this. The restoration of peace in Tajikistan in 1997 laid a solid foundation for a secular democratic State. The constitution was adopted by a national referendum. State bodies of authority have been performing efficiently at all levels, reflecting the entire spectrum of the extensive political life of the country.

This does not imply that nothing threatens our young democracy, or that it is invulnerable. As a President who knows the needs and problems of the people who have entrusted me with such a high office, I will be sincere and share some of my thoughts. These concern both domestic and international affairs, including relations with the United Nations.

First of all, we have no right to discredit the idea of democracy itself, in which Tajik society continues to place its hopes for a better life. However, experience has shown that there are no simple recipes for converting the political process into economic development. Moreover, Tajikistan's experience compellingly demonstrates the need for comprehensive post-conflict rehabilitation. Enhancing the practical benefits of such efforts must be a priority for the United Nations system and the international community. Conflict zones must be transformed into areas of stability, and serve as examples to help to prevent new tragedies.

Donors must make pledges that are responsible, and do not merely raise hopes. The central coordinating role in this respect undeniably falls to the United Nations. We are deeply grateful to the numerous friends of Tajikistan, including international financial institutions, for their support. We attach special importance to our cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies. We believe that the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace-building is doing useful work to enable the international community to better grasp the positive changes in our country and its interests and needs.

Now that Tajikistan has reached a new stage of development, we especially appreciate the assistance to achieve our priority goals. Today, as never before, Tajikistan needs assistance and practical support for effectively tapping our rich human and natural resources. We are resolved to making our economy up to date and competitive, inter alia, in order to overcome poverty once and for all.

I must note with regret that despite the many gains in international affairs these past years, the international community has still not managed to truly resolve the problem of poverty. Though the item has been discussed at many conferences and forums, no specific actions towards eliminating poverty have resulted. The growing gap between the rich and poor countries is becoming a global challenge and threatens

to emerge as the main obstacle to the harmonious development of both individual countries and the community of nations as a whole.

Of course, we must bear the primary burden of addressing social and economic problems. However, developing countries are justified in their expectations for alleviation of the external difficulties encountered in integrating into the world economy, which, in our case, is connected to access to investment, markets and high technologies. Equally pressing for us are the problems of landlocked countries that have long been discussed at international conferences, particularly closed borders and the many barriers to the free exchange of goods, services, capital and labour.

I would like to draw attention to another such issue: the problem of freshwater. We are glad that Tajikistan's proposal to proclaim 2003 the International Year of Freshwater was enthusiastically supported by the international community. Experience has shown that it was a very timely decision that met the expectations of us all. The shortage of freshwater is one of the most urgent concerns of the new millennium. Every year the demand for water increases because of the need to produce sufficient food — and I can provide statistics in support of that assertion. Some 1.2 billion people have no access to freshwater. More than 5 million people die every year from water-related diseases. According to estimates of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, meeting the food needs of the growing global population will require a 60 per cent increase in food production over the next 30 years. By 2030, one out of every five developing countries will be experiencing enormous difficulties because of current and future water shortages.

A significant investment must be made in updating technology and improving water resource management so as to support economic growth and lessen the burden of poverty.

Guided by the Water Appeal, which was adopted on 1 September 2003 by the participants of the International Freshwater Forum in Dushanbe, I propose that the period 2005-2015 be proclaimed the International Decade of Freshwater.

The adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on this important matter would mean the logical extension of the idea of the International Year of Freshwater. It would also be in keeping with the provisions of the Millennium Declaration, which set the goal of halving, by 2015, the number of people who lack access to freshwater and sanitation.

The International Decade of Freshwater would allow the international community to continue its focus on the issue of the shortage of water. Water, the common heritage of humankind, is vital for the preservation of life on Earth and essential for ensuring sustainable development.

It is well known that terrorism poses a threat to democracy. Tajikistan has had first-hand experience of this problem, as for 10 years we have been a kind of buffer zone against the expansion of terror in Central Asia and other countries. Precisely for that reason, Tajikistan has taken an active part in all efforts to root out that evil.

We are equally resolute in our condemnation of and desire to counteract all forms of terrorism. In this struggle, which we can win only through united efforts, there can be no selectivity or double standards. It is clear, however, that terrorism cannot be curbed solely by military methods. It would be equally erroneous to believe that the phenomenon is rooted in a single religion or culture. The rejection of democracy is not the only source of terrorism; terrorism also takes advantage of injustice and suffering, of the arrogance of some and the sense of humiliation felt by others.

Terrorism shows up in places where one "absolute truth" is confronted by another. Although terrorism has nothing to do with the conflict of civilizations, the extension of the dialogue among civilizations that was begun by the General Assembly in 1998 can contribute to better mutual understanding — the lack of which is quite evident.

Dialogue is always more constructive than war. Dialogue conducted in all areas will liberate international relations from fear and mistrust and will make international cooperation constructive and creative.

Our consolidated efforts have dealt a severe blow to terrorism as an organized phenomenon, but such efforts have not yet defeated it. One of the lessons learned in the course of this struggle — a struggle in which Tajikistan is an active participant — is that international terrorism has no ideology, nation or homeland. Furthermore, terrorism cannot exist without financial and logistical support. In this context, we should note that democracy is threatened by another

phenomenon that is no less frightening — that of drug aggression.

The illicit trade in drugs has become one of the major sources of financing for international terrorism. The urgency and magnitude of the problems related to the illicit drug trafficking provide clear proof that this is a global menace that endangers international stability and security as a whole.

Tajikistan has an extensive border with Afghanistan, and finds itself in a position between the world's major producer of opium and heroin and the drug-consuming countries, to which international organized crime is smuggling the "white death".

As President of Tajikistan, I consider the need to curb drug trafficking through my country to be one of our nation's top priorities. During his visit to Tajikistan last year, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, had the opportunity to observe the great professional skill and dedication of the staff of the Agency for Drug Control that has been established there with the support of the international community.

According to United Nations data, Tajikistan is ranked fourth in the world and first in the Commonwealth of Independent States in terms of the quantity of drugs withdrawn from trade. As a result of our efforts in the past four years, more than $1 billion worth of opiates has been confiscated from drug dealers.

The struggle against such narcotic aggression, which generates multibillion dollar profits in countries located far from Tajikistan, will be successful only through the consolidation of collective efforts.

Given the increased drug threat, and in order to expand multilateral cooperation in combating it, Tajikistan proposes the establishment of a global partnership to counteract the drug threat. Such a unique, broad anti-drug coalition could become a reliable barrier to the expansion of this scourge.

The Secretary-General could become coordinator of such a partnership, and the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention could become its central executive body. Such a global partnership would coordinate all efforts in the field at all levels, including the regional level.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of Members to another issue that is cause for concern. Certain groups of people have been using the global communications media recently in an attempt to equate such grave threats to humankind as terrorism and extremism with the holy religion of Islam. Such an interpretation represents a distortion of the peaceful essence of Islam and presents the religion to the international community as a source of evil and violence, thus giving rise to hostility towards the entire Muslim world and encouraging neo-fascist and other discriminatory attitudes.

We would like once again to stress that the acts of terror that are being carried out in a number of countries are crimes, committed by cruel, merciless people who are driven by the lust for power and personal gain - people who have nothing to do with the holy religion of the world's Muslims.

Humanity must understand that Islam is not a religion of violence, but like the world's other religions, calls upon people to show mercy and compassion and appeals for peace and harmony.

Tajikistan supports increased regional cooperation in all areas. Our goal is to create a zone of peace, stability, harmony and prosperity in Central Asia.

Turning Central Asia into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction is a matter of principle for Tajikistan, and that is why my country endorsed the idea of establishing a nuclear weapon-free zone in the region

Meanwhile, I would like to join the common concern about increased difficulties related to the non-proliferation of these types of weapon in the world, including South Asia. I am convinced that the time has come not to weaken, but rather to intensify, collective efforts and expand disarmament mechanisms.

Another issue has become a challenge of the twenty-first century — the increasing number of territories aspiring to the status of State but not recognized as such by the international community. Those territories become criminalized from within, establish external ties that are not quite legal and become catalysts for regional conflicts.

For that reason, it is in the interest of the international community to start, in the short term, to develop universal criteria for international recognition of States. By doing so, it would be possible to prevent the provocation of separatist sentiments in certain

regions that are fraught with negative consequences for the destinies of many peoples and States.

Tajikistan notes with satisfaction the considerable progress in the revival of Afghanistan. We are enthusiastic about how the international community is resolute in its support for processes of national accord and peace-building in our neighbouring country. Tajikistan is deeply aware of the need to render international support to Afghanistan, and it will increase its assistance to the efforts undertaken by the Afghanistan Government headed by Mr. Hamid Karzai.

Meanwhile, we are persistent in calling on the international community not to lessen its attention to the needs of that country, to renew its vigorous commitment to rendering support for positive change, to give fresh impetus to the peace process, making it irreversible, and to dramatically increase efforts to uproot drug production in Afghanistan.

Given the global danger of the drug problem, I once again call on the international community and relevant international organizations to develop a unified programme of action aimed at eradicating the production, manufacture and dissemination of drugs in that country.

The situation in Iraq continues to be a cause for pain and concern. Conditions there are still far from normal. It is not only a matter of the post-military environment, the lost lives of military personnel, and, even more sadly, of peaceful citizens. It is a matter of the lack of acceptable living conditions for many Iraqi people.

Though positive changes are obvious, restoring Iraq's sovereignty is the greatest priority. We share the majority opinion regarding the fact that the Iraqi people themselves should determine their future and that the international community, embodied by the United Nations, should be called on to render assistance in the implementation of that goal.

Every people follows its own road to democracy. However, only together can we deal with the challenges and the threats we face on this path.

The United Nations remains the ultimate, indeed unique, mechanism for taking collective action to address global issues. The noble goals for human development set out in the Millennium Declaration, which Tajikistan joined in signing, is convincing proof of that. The United Nations has united almost all countries of the world. All of us, the United Nations founding Member States and recently admitted Member States, pledged to observe its Charter. And that is the way it should be.

Our Organization is currently experiencing another test — the search for efficient answers in new circumstances with new requirements for world development. The point is that the Organization and its major bodies should keep up with the processes occurring in a constantly changing world. Though reform of the United Nations is under way, the time has come to channel the practical activities of all its bodies into real priorities.

In the field of international peace and security, the focus should be on the prevention of military conflicts, both intergovernmental and internal.

The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and all other components of the United Nations system are faced with the need to find convincing answers to the globalization process, in order to bridge the gap between the industrialized and the developing countries.

We expect improved professional skills from Secretariat staff members and increased practical outcome of their work and of the work of all United Nations agencies, for the benefit of all Member States.

The feeling that the United Nations is going through a crisis that materialized at some point is already fading. It is being substituted by an awareness of the need to strengthen the Organization, as well as for collective interaction within its framework. The preservation and the development of the Organization is our common goal, as the international community has no another similar universal mechanism.

The United Nations is the heritage of all humanity. Tajikistan will be resolute in doing everything possible for the successful implementation of the noble mission of the United Nations for the benefit of all mankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Simeon de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Simeon de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Simeon de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. This session will be one of the most decisive ones for the United Nations. In that spirit, I welcomed the call of the Secretary-General to heads of State and Government to actively participate in the work of this session.

I have come to New York to solemnly reiterate Bulgaria's steadfast support for the United Nations. Its principles, objectives and the spirit of solidarity that inspires it are at the very core of my country's foreign policy. I should like to pay sincere tribute to the remarkable efforts of the men and women who work for the Organization in every corner of the world. The terrorist attack against the United Nations in Baghdad on 19 August reminded us that nothing that we wish to do through the United Nations would be possible without the self-sacrifice of those people. I take this opportunity to honour the memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues, and I express once again the most sincere condolences of the people of Bulgaria to their families.

The barbaric act of 19 August sounded the alarm: terrorism is far from being vanquished; the vigilance of all United Nations Member States must be redoubled and the effectiveness of their efforts tripled. Indeed, the very function of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee cannot truly be effective unless it is supported by regional and subregional organizations. It is a question of creating a genuine global anti-terrorist action network in which a high-priority role naturally devolves to the European Union, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In my view, it is important that all United Nations Member States sign and ratify as soon as possible the 12 Conventions related to the fight against terrorism, as the Republic of Bulgaria has done, without, however, forgetting to address the origin — indeed, the root causes — of these desperate acts.

At the end of this year, Bulgaria will conclude its two-year mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. The conjunction of circumstances caused our Council membership to coincide with a particularly dynamic — indeed, dramatic — phase in international life, during which the very credibility of the United Nations was put to the test. It is obviously too early to draw all the possible conclusions from that experience, but one thing is clear: peace and stability in the world need the United Nations now more than ever before. In other words, there is no alternative to the United Nations.

We note that the credibility of the United Nations, and particularly of the Security Council, have been called into question each time Member States have seen their unity shaken. It is in that spirit that Bulgaria is doing its best to avoid the pitfalls of discord.

We fervently hope that the Council's unity will be restored on the thorny Iraqi issue. The stability and prosperity of Iraq — which is emerging from a ferocious dictatorship — are in the interest of the entire international community. Contributing to the country's stabilization in a concrete way, Bulgaria is working at the diplomatic level to find a formula that will enable the Iraqis to recover their sovereignty as swiftly as possible through a central and important United Nations role in the political process under way in the country.

It is essential that the Council be able to provide the United Nations a clear and realistic mandate that would facilitate the mission of the Secretary-General and his associates in Iraq — a mission that is already extremely complex and perilous. I believe that the provisional Governing Council represents the international community's best partner for helping the Iraqis to rebuild their country. In that context, Bulgaria

hopes to resume its traditional friendly relations with Iraq.

My Government is very concerned as a result of events in the Middle East. The road map elaborated by the Quartet remains valid and must be implemented by the parties concerned. The Government of Bulgaria reiterates its appeal to the Palestinian Authority to fully meet its obligations under the road map to stop suicide attacks against civilians. We call on the Israeli Government to stop extrajudicial executions and to renounce its plans to expel President Yasser Arafat.

Although South-Eastern Europe is experiencing a period of peace, accelerated development and better prospects for integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, there are still points of tension that cannot be ignored. Obviously, I am thinking of the situation in Kosovo, where the United Nations is playing an irreplaceable role. Bulgaria hopes for a multi-ethnic, democratic and prosperous Kosovo, as envisaged by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The recent acts of violence make us think that the enemies of that particular Kosovo have not given up. I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance that my country attaches to respect for and protection of religious monuments in Kosovo. I can affirm that the solution to the Kosovo problem can be found in dialogue — particularly dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade — that respects the right of all the province's inhabitants to live in peace, whatever their ethnic affiliation.

Two years after having had the opportunity to speak before the General Assembly, I have the privilege to share with Members Bulgaria's significant progress in attaining its principal foreign policy objective: joining the European Union and NATO. In 2004, Bulgaria will become a member of the Atlantic Alliance. We are about to conclude negotiations with the European Union with a view to acceding to it on 1 January 2007. Such progress will enable my country to be even more effective in the implementation of the principles and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

Beginning 1 January 2004, Bulgaria will assume the chairmanship of the OSCE for one year. The Bulgarian chairmanship of that important regional body will devote priority attention to cooperation with the United Nations. In our view, the experience accumulated by the OSCE with regard to organizing and observing free and democratic elections could be as useful to the United Nations as to other regional forums. The defence and consolidation of human rights are naturally part of our priorities.

It is difficult for me to conclude without mentioning what I believe to be the main thread running through the discourse in this Hall — the future of the United Nations. One thing is certain: at a time of globalization, the sole institution of multilateralism that is universal in nature is in fact irreplaceable. The great issues of the modern world - international peace and security, the fight against poverty and for development, the defence and promotion of human rights, and protection of the environment and of human health — cannot find lasting solutions except through the efforts of, and within the framework of, the United Nations.

It goes without saying that the United Nations can meet these formidable challenges only if it undergoes a profound process of reform. Reform must be undertaken without violating the principles or spirit of the Charter. It must be carried out with determination, but not in haste.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has identified the genuine problems that we, the Member States, must tackle. As always, he has asked the right questions. My Government supports his efforts to assist Member countries in crafting a clear and far-sighted vision of the future of the United Nations, in particular by means of his idea of appointing a group of eminent personalities to provide ideas for such reforms. Bulgaria is ready to participate in that act of collective reflection, which will require both courage and wisdom.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Uribe Vélez (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election as President of the General Assembly, and to wish you every success in the performance of your duties.

Despite the anxiety that we feel in the face of the terrorism that is affecting so many countries, we reaffirm our commitment to fight that scourge until we have defeated it. Colombia reaffirms its faith in multilateralism as the most effective system through which to seek peace, security and human, economic and social development. The United Nations is irreplaceable, even if, for the good of the humanity, its structure and procedures must be constantly updated so as to increase the efficiency of its anti-terrorism activities.

The United Nations itself recently suffered a terrorist attack, an act that resulted in the death of Sergio Vieira de Mello, a tireless campaigner for the coexistence of peoples. We deeply regret the loss of those who have sacrificed their lives as they worked to put an end to terrorism. Our obligation to reciprocate is all the greater as a result of the solidarity expressed by the United Nations towards Colombia.

A year ago in the General Assembly I set out my democratic security policy, developed to free the Colombian people from terrorism. That policy is designed to protect the rights of all citizens, regardless of their social or economic status, political ideas or religious beliefs. The policy affords equal protection to business and union leaders as well as Government and opposition politicians. It is based on the dream of a pluralist nation that shares in an ongoing constructive debate in a spirit of brotherhood and without hatred.

In an area of Colombia covering almost 1.2 million square kilometres, about 400,000 of them consisting of jungle, terrorists have taken advantage of the absence of a State presence in many places. A year ago, out of a total of 1,100 municipalities, 170 did not have a police presence. That number has been reduced to 151, and we hope to extend coverage to all the municipalities within a few weeks. Hundreds of smaller towns, however, lack a police force. We now have soldiers and marines — known as soldiers of the people — in 439 municipalities, under a programme that allows them to carry out their military service in their home town. The results thus far have been positive, and when the soldiers have completed their active duty, we hope to rely on them as permanent law-enforcement leaders.

Such efforts, together with others that we have undertaken in similar areas, must continue so that the Government can rid the country of terrorism.

I would like to share with the Assembly some of the achievements of my Administration during the first nine months of this year. The murder rate has decreased by 22 per cent when compared with the same period in 2002 — down from 21,253 to 16,531. The total of 1,485 kidnappings represents a reduction of 34.7 per cent over the same period last year; the number of victims of illegal road blocks decreased by 49 per cent, and the number of operations to rescue kidnapped people increased by 22.8 per cent. But what country could accept 1,485 kidnappings in nine months?

The number of massacres and the number of their victims have decreased by 35 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. We will be able to claim victory only when we have completely eliminated these attacks. Every terrorist act brings suffering to the whole nation. FARC carried out the car bombing of the club El Nogal, used a bomb in a boat in the rural town of Puerto Rico and exploded a truck bomb in the small town of Chita. These bombings together killed 47 people and injured 233. And just a few hours ago, in Florencia, another bomb has left 12 dead and wounded 46.

The number of union members assassinated has declined from 120 to 36. Several of those responsible are now in jail, as a result of our determination to fight impunity. Sixty teachers were murdered in 2002. This year, 24 such cases have been reported. The number of journalists murdered has dropped from 9 to 5.

The decrease in overall crime is significant, but the numbers are still staggering. No country could feel safe under such circumstances. I reaffirm our democratic desire to protect, in particular, our teachers, union leaders and journalists.

I acknowledge with great sorrow that the number of indigenous people murdered has increased from 72 to 75. Illegal self-defence groups were responsible for 33 of those cases, with various guerrilla groups being responsible for the remainder.

During the first six months of 2003, 73,586 cases of forced displacement were reported. This represents a decrease of 66 per cent. We are beginning successfully to return families to where they came from. I reaffirm our commitment to fight to protect the indigenous communities and to put an end to forced displacement.

Of the 246 mayors who in August 2002 were in exile from their municipalities as a result of threats, 191 have now returned, thanks to the improved security situation. The progress we have made in regard to the protection of our citizens encourages us to continue making efforts in that direction.

Between 7 August 2002 and 7 August 2003, 2,544 members of illegal self-defence groups were captured, which represents an increase of 146 per cent. The number of those killed in combat by the armed forces has increased by 38.7 per cent, the number of guerrillas captured has increased by 126.3 per cent and the number of those killed in combat has increased by 78 per cent.

Because of my pure democratic conviction, I reaffirm our commitment to human rights. We have extended the stay of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner in Bogota. We agree with many of its recommendations. We have no doubt about seeking their implementation, and we will discuss the cases on which we disagree.

Our requirement for the soldiers and the police is efficiency and respect for human rights. We encourage and care for our armed forces, as we demonstrated recently with the improvement of our social security system. However, we will not hesitate to send to jail those who break the law.

The sacrifice of our soldiers and policemen has been enormous. This year, because of anti-personnel mines alone, 109 soldiers have been killed and 334 have been wounded, many of them mutilated for life.

If we request international support, it is because we are open to international monitoring. We respect the human rights organizations and their workers who proceed seriously and we respect their criticism and constructive suggestions. Those organizations contribute to improving democratic conditions. That is why we agree with the Human Rights Watch report on the recruitment of children by terrorist groups. We reserve the right, however, to disagree with false reports which distort our efforts to consolidate a democratic concept of security.

As the United Nations has acknowledged, we have made substantial progress in destroying illicit drugs. We have eradicated 70 per cent of illicit crops, and we will not stop until we rid our country of that serious scourge. We have authorized the extradition of 94 persons for drug-trafficking crimes.

We have hired 5,400 families as forest rangers, as part of our goal to recruit 50,000 families. They receive economic compensation to replace illicit crops for the purpose of replanting and taking care of the rainforest.

Mr. Da Fonseca (Cape Verde), (Vice-President), took the Chair.

A more effective law designed to confiscate illicit drug wealth has allowed for the increase in the number of rulings in one year from 5 to 68.

In Colombia's current situation, terrorism, illicit drugs, violence and insecurity are really the same thing. We plead for a commitment from the world so that we are able to completely defeat drugs. We implore the world not to harbour our terrorists, to help us confiscate their goods and to open their doors only to help peace processes.

Our country is a State based on law. We want to overcome terrorism and be able to look to the international community with the certainty that we have acted in strict compliance with the law. In order to fight impunity, we have incorporated the accusatory penal system and oral procedure, which will begin in 2005.

At the present time we are introducing a constitutional change to allow the armed forces to proceed with specialized personnel, in cases of terrorism, to carry out raids, conduct property searches and undertake interceptions. Those actions will be conducted with democratic safeguards, allowing for an independent attorney to intervene quickly. The attorney's office and Congress will be informed. The proposed measures are infinitely less rigorous than the current laws of democracies that do not have the high levels of terrorism that we have in Colombia.

This Government found approximately 30,000 people who belong to illegal terrorist organizations, defined in this way because of the nature of their actions. Consideration and reflection on that figure dictates the need to continue with a strong authoritarian policy and of opening avenues for negotiation once hostilities have ceased.

I welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General this past year to seek paths to peace with the FARC. The Government supports his good offices, which, until now, have been unsuccessful because of the lack of willingness on the part of the terrorists. That group has kidnapped hundreds of Colombians and some foreign citizens, most of whom are kept in concentration camps that recall the Nazi era. I reaffirm to the Secretary-General my commitment to find a solution, to be recommended by him, to free the hostages, under conditions that are in keeping with legal norms and that do not intensify violence.

Since the last Colombian Government, we have sought, through Cuba, on the one hand, and several additional Governments on the other, a peace process with the National Liberation Army (ELN). We have made every effort, which, to date, has been futile. The leaders of that group who are in jail have received the best treatment possible. On 30 June, through a facilitation commission, I offered to examine an ELN prisoner release proposal, in exchange for their renunciation of armed activity and their dedication to help achieve peace. I did not get a positive response, but I will continue to insist on this.

The ELN is holding seven foreign citizens whom it should release, in keeping with its promise to cease its crimes during the current electoral process.

Since the last Government, we have also sought a peace process with the illegal paramilitary groups, with the mediation of the Catholic Church. The condition is the same — the cessation of hostilities. Groups of those organizations, which represent 10,000 or more people, have expressed the willingness to demobilize. The Government is making progress in that process.

During my Administration, 2,250 members of terrorist groups have been demobilized; 70 per cent of them belong to the FARC, 18 per cent to the ELN and 12 per cent to illegal paramilitary groups. To reintegrate members of the various groups into civilian life, Colombia requires a judicial framework that realistically defines how to achieve justice, repair damage to the community and ensure peace. The alternative sentence proposal, submitted by the Government for congressional consideration, sets forth a legal and transparent procedure that will allow for progress towards a negotiated peace solution with the illegal paramilitary groups, the FARC and the ELN.

I understand the concern raised by offering diminished sentences for grave crimes. But, in a context of 30,000 terrorists, it must also be understood that a definitive peace is the best justice for a nation in which several generations have never gone through a single day without experiencing an act of terrorism.

The proposal has prompted national and international controversy. We are looking for the broadest possible consensus. We invite everyone to examine the various options and to achieve, through the process of amendments, the best final text.

We have no doubt about defeating terrorism. However, there are times that call for adjusting the equation between justice and peace in order to reach a consolidated peace.

We agree with what was expressed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has proposed an excellent balance between the need for justice and the need to save innocent lives. To protect our communities, we need to pursue terrorists relentlessly and not miss opportunities to obtain peace agreements with them, provided that, through their actions, they convince the Colombian people and the world of their good faith and their desire for rectification.

Our problem is an international threat. If Colombia does not destroy illegal drugs, illegal drugs will destroy the Amazon Basin. If Colombia does not stop terrorism, it will jeopardize the democracies of the region. The President of Ecuador, Lucio Gutiérrez, and the Rio Group, have understood that. The Rio Group endorsed the proposal that the United Nations continue to make efforts for negotiations with the Colombian terrorists, or, if that is not possible, to seek alternatives to overcome the problem.

Our rule of law calls for a social commitment. Poverty and inequality have worsened as a result of terrorism. We are making progress with limited resources in applying the seven tools for equality: an educational revolution, expanded social protection, an economy based on the principle of solidarity, rural social management, management of public services,

building a country of owners and improving the quality of urban life.

As examples of this, we have created new capacity for 500,000 children in schools, but we still have 1.5 million children who do not have access to primary education. Microcredit has increased by 50 per cent, but we are still far from being a country of owners. The social task is arduous, but with our characteristic determination we will overcome every obstacle in order to build a just society.

Security is the most important human right of the poor, who need our policy to be successful so that there can be peace, confidence, investment, employment and equity.

Amidst tragedies, the Colombian democracy is vigorous. On 25 October, our citizens will decide whether to accept a referendum to defeat corruption and to strengthen social investment. And the following day the people will elect 30 governors from among 133 candidates; 914 mayors from among 3,441 candidates; 398 deputies from 373 lists composed of 2,723 candidates; approximately 9,000 municipal council members from 6,105 lists with 56,590 candidates; and local administrative boards from 3,156 lists with 13,387 candidates. Today, we live in a pluralistic and enthusiastic democracy, despite the challenge of terrorism.

It would be a tragedy if the civilized world does not unite its efforts once and for all to defeat terrorism and to support the democracies that are fighting against it. We need the unity of all democratic people in order to defeat terror.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau.

Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Pierantozzi (Palau): I bring to the Assembly greetings and good wishes from the President of the Republic of Palau, Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., and from the people and the Government of the Republic of Palau.

Nearly 60 years ago, in his final inaugural address, United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt reflected on the lessons of the first half of the twentieth century. He said:

> "We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. ... We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community."

Those words have more resonance today than ever before as Palau and the rest of the world enter into the twenty-first century. The Republic of Palau is enjoying rapid development, which came with its independence on 1 October nine years ago. However, at a time of rapid globalization, when events halfway around the world — and most recently in our own backyard — can profoundly affect our safety and prosperity, Palau realizes that it must join the international community in this new challenge to protect our people at home and our way of life.

To that end, the Republic of Palau reaffirms its unwavering support for the war led by the United States against terrorism. We all benefit when nations

come together to deter aggression and terrorism, to resolve conflicts, to prevent the spread of diseases and the spread of dangerous weapons, to promote democracy and human rights, to open markets and to create economic and financial stability, to raise living standards and to protect the environment — to face those myriad challenges that no nation can meet alone.

Globalization, however, also brings about risks. Outlaw States and ethnic conflicts threaten regional stability and progress in many important areas of the world. Weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, drug trafficking and other international crimes are global concerns that transcend national borders. Other problems originating overseas — such as the depletion of resources, rapid population growth, environmental damage, new infectious diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), pervasive corruption and uncontrolled refugee migration — have increasingly significant implications for every nation's security. National economies will suffer if the global economy is unstable or if markets collapse, and the highest environmental standards — such as those set out in the Kyoto Protocol — will not protect small, struggling island countries like Palau if other countries do not join the global effort to bring about peace and stability.

Protection of the environment is a major concern to us. Decisions made today regarding the environment and natural resources can affect every nation's security for generations. Environmental threats do not respect national borders, but they can pose long-term dangers for every nation's security and well-being. Scarcity and depletion of natural resources can trigger and exacerbate conflict. Environmental threats — such as climate change, the depletion of stratospheric ozone, the introduction of nuisance plant and animal species, the overharvesting of fish and of other living natural resources, and the transnational movement of hazardous chemicals and waste — directly threaten the health and economic well-being of every people of the world. For Palau, the immediate danger is the rise in sea level.

Another issue that we wish to address is that of the cloning of human beings. We believe that any global and comprehensive ban on human cloning must include a ban on the cloning of human embryos for research purposes. While the goal of finding cures to chronic illnesses is laudable, progress and economic gain achieved by creating and destroying human life come at too high a price. We believe that adult-stem-cell research is a promising field of study that can provide an ethical source of stem cells for scientific investigation. The international community must not allow human life to be devalued in any way, and we encourage all States to adopt such measures as may be necessary to prohibit techniques of genetic engineering that may have adverse consequences on respect for human dignity.

In public health, we note that many peoples around the world are suffering and dying each day from the scourges of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, cancer, polio and similar diseases. Combined international support for public health beyond the clinic walls must be advocated and put into practice if we are to eliminate some of those challenges to quality human life.

Such international support and collaborative efforts were recently manifested during the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). I also urge all members of this body to support and ratify the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control adopted by the World Health Assembly this year. More importantly, we should combine our efforts to implement the mission of the Convention to control tobacco use, which contributes to diseases and death throughout the world.

The United Nations is to truly represent all peoples, with discrimination and exclusion eliminated from its operational practice. To be effective at ensuring international peace and security, all nations, large and small, must be represented in the United Nations. The Republic of China on Taiwan can no longer be kept on the sidelines of the most important international Organization and the leading forum for international dialogue. Over the past half-century, the hard-working people of Taiwan have transformed their country into the world' s seventeenth largest economy and a vibrant democracy. In 1996, Taiwan had its first direct presidential election and, in 2000, accomplished its first peaceful transfer of executive powers. Since then Taiwan's popularly-elected Government has acted in accordance with United Nations resolutions to combat international terrorism and to support humanitarian relief in countries throughout the world, and yet it is still excluded from the process. Our experience with SARS has shown us tha' exclusion can bring no benefits to anyone. The 23 million Taiwanese people have an equal right to a voice in the United

Nations and should be welcomed by all members of this body.

The central purpose of the United Nations is the preservation and advancement of world peace. It accomplishes its peacemaking and humanitarian assistance efforts through international cooperation. Its 191 Member States, large and small, rich and poor, and with different political views, strive collectively to address global challenges and advance world peace. Together, they consider and decide on the world's most pressing problems. Thus, in this regard I ask the world here today, at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, to study and discuss the roots of terrorism and possible solutions, including inter-religious intervention; to promote conservation standards to protect our Earth's environment; to promote world public health; to protect the human dignity by banning the cloning of human embryos; and to continue our quest for peace and security for all peoples of the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau for her statement.

Mrs. Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice-President and Minister of Health of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Let me convey my congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We are confident that this Assembly stands to benefit greatly from his diplomatic experience and skills. Like others, I pledge the full support and cooperation of the Lao delegation to him as he undertakes his duties and express the hope that our deliberations on many of the most pressing world issues will be fruitful.

Since the last time we convened, the world has gone through major changes and challenges. Although peace, dialogue and cooperation for development continue to prevail today across many regions, we have been bearing witness to a world beset by terror, civil wars, armed conflicts and violence, acts of aggression and interference in the internal affairs of States. In handling these problems, we believe it is incumbent upon all of us to show patience, courage and determination and to strive to solve them through dialogue, diplomacy and political means. Towards that end, we should continue to seek multilateral routes through the United Nations. In this regard, we should like to make special mention of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. While we wish him more success as he endeavours to defend and promote the principles and ideals of this universal Organization, we can only express great appreciation for the efforts he has made.

At present, the problems plaguing our planet, alas, are not limited to those considered to be political or military. There are also those that affect the environmental, social and economic fronts. More striking are the issues of global warming, pollution, natural disasters, HIV/AIDS, incurable diseases, poverty and underdevelopment, the crises of refugees, debt and economic stagnation, which have yet to find effective solutions. The severity of these problems is even more acute in a globalized world in which the gap between developed and developing countries is widening.

We should therefore strive effectively to address these problems in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals adopted three years ago by this Assembly. Standing here today and recommitting ourselves to meeting those noble Goals, we want a world where poverty and hunger are alleviated; where education is offered to every child; where women have the same opportunities as men; where incurable diseases are effectively combated; and where the world continues to build partnership and cooperation for sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

For many years, the land-locked developing countries have attached a particular interest to their special needs and problems. As Chairman of the 31-member Group of Land-Locked Developing Countries for the past four years, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has spared no effort in bringing the special needs and problems of land-locked developing countries to the forefront of the international arena. As a result of this long-standing concerted effort, the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development

Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation was held last month in Kazakhstan as the first-ever United Nations conference of its kind. The meeting adopted the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action. We are delighted that this global Programme of Action addresses, first and foremost, the special needs and problems of the landlocked developing countries, while taking into account the legitimate concerns of transit developing countries. In this respect, all stakeholders are urged to fully and effectively implement the Almaty Programme of Action in the years to come.

Since its inception, the United Nations has performed multiple activities in various areas, such as the maintenance of peace and security, socio-economic development, humanitarian assistance, the promotion of international law, human rights and the protection of the environment. In these endeavours, the United Nations has achieved many successes, including in the field of socio-economic development. However, in many other areas, still more effort is required in order to attain better results.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his annual report this year,

> "in the area of peace and security, it has been a trying year for the United Nations. The war in Iraq severely tested the principle of collective security and the resilience of the Organization." (*A/58/1, para. 2*)

In the light of this, and given the present international situation, the Security Council, the main body for the maintenance of international peace and security, should play its full role in securing peace and security in the world, as stipulated in the Charter. The Security Council members, especially the permanent members, should do everything possible to ensure that this organ effectively discharges its duties in the maintenance of peace and security. A safe and secure world would enable all nations to better promote their socio-economic development. The international community is therefore urged to deploy serious efforts towards this end.

In a world where cooperation for development is widespread, where in every region there is economic integration to achieve common benefits, it is regrettable that the economic, commercial and financial restrictions imposed on Cuba continue. We reaffirm the support of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the General Assembly resolution calling for the lifting of such a restrictive policy, with the aim of benefiting all peoples in the region as well as the world at large.

With regard to the Middle East, we continue to be gravely concerned about the ongoing violence and disproportionate use of force that have brought nothing but destruction and death to both Palestine and Israel. We urge the two sides to exercise the utmost restraint and engage in earnest negotiations so that peace and cooperation may eventually ensue in the region. If that is done, by 2005 the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and viable State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, could become a reality.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has followed the recent developments in the Korean peninsula with great attention. We render our full support to the six-party talks hosted in Beijing in August by the Government of China, which contributed actively. We are pleased with the significant progress achieved by this meeting. We very much hope that the dialogue process will be pursued to address the nuclear issue in parallel with the security of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This would no doubt contribute to the realization of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, the assurance of security for all countries in North-East Asia and the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas.

Over the past year, the Lao people of all ethnic groups have pursued their national development in unity and harmony. We are delighted that, through the promotion of the untapped potential of all domestic economic sectors and the expansion of cooperation with the international community, the pace of national economic growth has continuously increased; the livelihood of the people, particularly those in the rural areas, has been further improved; and, last but not least, political stability and social order have been ensured and strengthened.

In order to free the country from underdevelopment, apart from our domestic effort, we have attached great importance to the achievements made in our increased effort to implement the regional integration of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). We highly value the continued development of cooperation between ASEAN and the People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India and other dialogue partners. Furthermore, we are pleased with the new chapter in the

strengthening of cooperation between ASEAN and the United States, in particular the signing of the bilateral trade agreement between the Governments of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United States in Vientiane on 19 September this year. In this regard, I wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to friendly countries and international organizations for the invaluable assistance and support rendered to the cause of our national development.

As it enters this new century, humankind has a strong aspiration for peace and cooperation for development across the globe. In accordance with the Charter and international law, we should exert our collective efforts to build a better world. In this spirit, our delegation once again calls for cooperation and unity in designing and implementing action-oriented measures to tackle the challenges and problems plaguing our planet. If we do this, future generations will commend us for all our efforts in establishing conditions for their peaceful lives and prosperity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Petersen (Norway): The brutal attacks on the United Nations Mission in Baghdad are beyond comprehension. I condemn them in the strongest possible terms. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. We must renew our efforts to bolster respect for humanitarian principles. It is unacceptable that United Nations personnel are unable to conduct humanitarian relief operations without risking their lives. It is unacceptable that United Nations personnel are denied access to people in distress.

On behalf of the people of Norway, I wish to express my respect and admiration to all United Nations workers who are doing what they can to help in Iraq and other zones of conflict and danger.

Unless the security needs in Iraq are met, valuable time on the road to political stability, democracy and economic and social development will be lost. Without a safe and secure environment, the United Nations is unable to help Iraq along that road. I deplore the political assassinations of religious and political leaders in Iraq.

Now we must focus our attention on what is needed to rebuild Iraq. Norway is participating in international efforts to stabilize and rebuild Iraq for the benefit of the Iraqi people. Our aim is to help the people of Iraq regain control of their own destiny, to help them build a future of freedom and justice and a life in peace with their neighbours.

The United Nations should play a key role in setting the benchmarks and guiding the political process towards the early restoration of Iraq's sovereignty and the transfer of power to an Iraqi government. A carefully considered timeframe must be drawn up. We must also make sure that the tasks that we decide for the United Nations in Iraq are realistic and achievable.

Terrorism is a dark force, which targets the very values and norms upon which the United Nations Charter is based. An overwhelming majority of Member States have joined forces to fight it, and we have taken some important steps together. We need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We need to agree on strong and effective regimes that can provide reliable protection against weapons of mass destruction.

A week ago, world leaders and the Secretary-General sat down in New York at the invitation of Norway to discuss ways to fight terrorism and the roots of evil. They voiced their dedication to the fight against terrorism, and their determination to place humanity at the centre of that fight.

We want a United Nations that reaches out and responds to the concerns of all Member States. It must reach out and respond to the concerns of all individuals, to the needs of men and women alike. We need a world of equal opportunities, where all the world's human resources — and not only half of them — are fully put to use. We have a vision of a humane world where people can live in security and dignity, free from poverty and despair. To live up to the ideals enshrined in the Charter, the United Nations must continue to give priority to human rights and fundamental aspects of governance.

A culture of impunity for mass atrocities is incompatible with human dignity and undermines long-term security. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is a historic turning point.

Fighting terrorism, strengthening human security, working for development and preventing conflict are challenges that are closely related. In the Millennium

Development Goals, we have pledged to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and to reduce child mortality by two-thirds. We have pledged to halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Norway currently holds the chairmanship of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and we are committed to achieving real progress. It is crucial that developing and developed countries and the private sector all contribute. Development must be built on a global partnership and on shared responsibilities. Norway remains committed to the Doha Development Agenda. We are confident that strengthening and making full use of this multilateral framework is the way to go. We will work hard to get the negotiations back on track.

More often than not, the United Nations only becomes engaged in earnest after armed conflict has broken out. The reasons are many, but they are no excuse for the loss of lives, the human misery and the setbacks in development that are too often the high price of collective inaction. Too often the main legacy of a civil war is another civil war. Yet there are many things we can do to prevent this from happening.

We can act to prevent economic conflict drivers such as diamonds and other natural resources, from fuelling and prolonging conflicts, and we can act to curb the illegal trade in small arms. By fighting poverty and promoting peace and development, we are making the soundest investment possible in Africa. We will assist the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in their endeavours towards economic and social development and political stability in Africa.

Norway will continue working for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. The peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea is entering a crucial phase. We urge both parties to stand by their commitments and not hesitate now that they stand at the threshold of lasting peace.

In the Sudan, important progress has just been made. We urge the parties to step up their efforts and reach a final settlement.

Over the last few years, the United Nations has made considerable progress in peacekeeping. The foundations for a new approach have been laid. Notable results have been achieved in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste, as well as in reinforcing the capabilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and strengthening the United Nations Standby Arrangement System.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is facing a particularly challenging task. Two years on, much has been achieved, but the situation is still volatile. The safe and secure environment needed for economic growth and full implementation of the Bonn Agreement is not in place. Many people are suffering from food shortages, and are in need of assistance. Elections are due next year. Women are not yet properly empowered. Unless we can assure nation-wide security, the nation-building process in Afghanistan will be at risk. A sustained international presence will be necessary for the foreseeable future.

With NATO in command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Norway as a NATO member has an additional stake in the building of a peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan. We have decided to make Afghanistan one of our partner countries in development cooperation.

In Sri Lanka the peace process has reached a decisive juncture. We are hopeful that the parties will soon be able to embark on negotiations towards an interim administration for the North-East Province. It is vital that the parties reach agreement and resume direct peace negotiations within the timeframe envisaged.

Development of the economic infrastructure is equally important for all in Sri Lanka. In parallel with dealing with the political process, the parties should take care to proceed with the important task of reconstruction and development.

The President returned to the Chair.

Norway remains firmly committed to the role of facilitator of the peace process between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. We call on the international community to engage in the efforts for reconstruction and rehabilitation in Sri Lanka.

In Myanmar the Government has recently stated its intention to invite the democratic opposition and the ethnic minorities to take part in the building of a national consensus. A good way to start would be to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and without conditions and thereby demonstrate the Government's

sincere intentions. This might mean the beginning of a new political era in Myanmar. Norway stands ready to support efforts to make democratization an irreversible process. We strongly support the role of the United Nations and believe that the active involvement of countries in the region will be vital to reaching a solution.

The year 2003 has been a tragic one for Israelis and Palestinians. Their acceptance of the road map for peace boded well, but again violence and not politics is determining the course of development. A political solution is needed, building on a parallel process where Israel takes significant steps to end the occupation, and where the Palestinian Authority takes determined steps to fight terror. The ultimate goal, in which we will not lose faith, is that of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security.

Norway urges Israel to do its utmost to ease the living conditions of the Palestinians. In our capacity as chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for assistance to the Palestinian people, Norway remains committed to rebuilding the Palestinian areas.

Norway also believes that the parties should avail themselves of the assistance of the international community and individual countries through appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

The past year has been a trying one for the United Nations. Multilateralism has come under pressure from those who continue to question the primacy of the United Nations and therefore look elsewhere for solutions.

The answer to this challenge is to make the United Nations more effective and thus more relevant in dealing with issues at the top of the international agenda. By increasing the relevance of the United Nations we can increase its authority and legitimacy. Norway shares the Secretary-General's view that Member States need to take a hard look at today's United Nations institutions and ask whether they are adequate for the tasks we have before us.

The time has come to advance the issue of reform of the Security Council. It is also time to agree on a more relevant agenda for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. Norway puts emphasis on reforming the work of the First Committee. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a high-level panel to recommend concrete ways in which to strengthen the functioning of the major bodies of the United Nations and the relationships between them. Norway, together with the Nordic countries, has a long-standing commitment to reform. We stand ready to assist in bringing the initiatives of the Secretary-General to fruition.

The aims and ideals of the United Nations are as relevant as ever — to maintain peace and security, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, to establish conditions for justice and the international rule of law and to promote economic and social development.

The world has changed since 1945, but the United Nations has not changed with it. I urge Member States to come together with a renewed sense of unity and purpose, so that we can change our Organization in the collective spirit that lies at the core of the Charter.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Opertti (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay believes in the United Nations, has faith in the United Nations, will support the Organization and will continue to contribute to it, as it has been doing since it became one of its founding Members. It is comforting to note that, at this time of crisis for the Organization, virtually all the participants in this debate have expressed this same sentiment.

Some six decades ago, the United Nations was created to promote and regulate multilateral cooperation, by which the international community agreed to address and resolve common problems. The structure of the Organization, the functioning of its organs, and the rights and obligations of its Members, as formulated in the San Francisco Charter, all reflected the international political reality of that time.

But, over the course of more than half a century, there have been profound changes in the structure of international society. Its actors have multiplied and become more diverse and there have been new and more dangerous manifestations of violence. New threats to peace that were not foreseen by the drafters of the Charter occur with increasing frequency. At the same time, there has been an intensification of certain growing trends that seriously affect the well-being of humanity, such as the degradation of the environment,

the depletion of natural resources, epidemics and the contrast between consumer societies and societies that live in extreme poverty.

In recent years, and in particular during this general debate, special emphasis has been placed on the need to reform and revitalize the United Nations in order to adapt it to current realities. Uruguay shares this position, not only because it considers that this Organization has not been completely effective in its handling of some recent crises, but because it understands that the scale of the changes in the world today justifies the search for ways of adapting the institution.

Although it is true that the system of collective security established by the San Francisco Charter has not always been able to respond to crises effectively, in numerous cases multilateral action by the United Nations has succeeded in restoring peace in many regions and countries, contributed to the consolidation of democracy, and accelerated the reconstruction of affected countries. There are many more cases in which the Organization, through its various organs, has exercised positive and decisive control over crises and conflicts, thus preventing the situation from becoming worse and ensuring a peaceful solution.

The process of reform, which is indispensable and cannot be delayed, should in our view be based on the following premises.

The first is to preserve intact the purposes and principles of the Organization, as enshrined in the Charter of San Francisco. After all, if we all gather here every year as the United Nations, it is because our nations are united around the values and ideals enshrined in the Charter and shared by all mankind, whose permanent and universal validity transcends the vicissitudes and accidents of history.

The second premise is that the reform process should be aimed principally at strengthening multilateral action, because never before has the need to cooperate and act together to deal with international problems been so great. Common global responses are needed to the proliferation and diversification of international actors; the fact that the world is getting smaller and more and more interdependent, due to the increase in trade and the extraordinary development of information and communication technologies; and above all the globalization of threats to peace, security and the well-being of our peoples. To use the words employed by the Secretary-General in this Assembly two weeks ago, Uruguay believes in "collective answers to our common problems and challenges" (A/58/PV.7).

Two years ago, the international community, through the United Nations organs, offered a fine example of solidarity by taking effective multilateral action in reaction to international terrorism, which threatens Governments, peoples, ideologies, religions and above all human reason, imbued with such elementary values as tolerance, compassion, solidarity and respect for human rights.

The attack on the headquarters of the United Nations in Baghdad — for which we wish again to express our most sincere condolences to the Secretary-General — is but another example of the barbarity and fanaticism that we can successfully fight only if we work together. With this attack, terrorism has given us a raw example of its destructive universality. The deaths of Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and of other colleagues is emblematic of the tragedy suffered.

Just as in the fight against poverty, terrorism cannot be defeated as a conventional enemy would be with a victorious battle. The eradication of terrorism is an ongoing objective whose achievement requires time, patience and perseverance. Only through a joint approach and multilateral action directed above all at the roots of terrorism — not only at its atrocious manifestations — will it be possible to reduce and hopefully to eliminate this perverse and ubiquitous enemy and at the very least ensure its total rejection.

Uruguay, which is party to most international anti-terrorism instruments, attaches priority to the conclusion of a general convention against international terrorism. In this respect, we wish to express our satisfaction to the Secretary-General for having chosen transnational organized crime and terrorism as an item in the signing and accession ceremony for treaties promoted by the Organization on the occasion of this general debate.

The third premise to which my country subscribes is that we must not forget that the United Nations has for years now been engaged in a process of self-criticism and self-reform based on the idea that strengthening an institution means strengthening its organs. Reforms are being implemented in three of the main organs of the Organization. The modalities of

each one of the respective processes differ. In the Security Council, we are pursuing reform of its membership to make it more representative and to strengthen its democratic character. In the General Assembly, we are pursuing its revitalization so that its decisions can regain the authority they had in the past. In the Secretariat, the purpose of change is to enhance its effectiveness, an objective towards which the Secretary-General is working strenuously. These three processes are closely linked to each other but, despite this close link, we believe that they must continue to be pursued, as is now being done, separately, each one in its respective forum.

For Uruguay, one of the most important aspects of these reforms is the strengthening of the General Assembly, over which you, Sir, are presiding with such dignity and whose decisions are the most genuine manifestations of the will of the international community. Recent reforms are aimed at making this organ more effective, but more profound changes are required in order to restore the authority which the Charter grants it and which the Assembly has exerted in the past. We believe that there is still a great deal of room for reform. Obsolete structures and procedures remain. We also need to re-examine and evaluate the organization, conduct and outcome of the annual session that brings us all here together every year, including the idea of concentrating the negotiation of dozens of resolutions into a few weeks. Uruguay will support far-reaching measures to revitalize the Assembly. A better relationship between the different organs is no doubt another of the necessary areas for reform.

The fourth and final premise is that the efforts to reform our institutions must be complemented by equally vigorous efforts to change our own conduct as Members of the United Nations. When we agreed to become Members of this Organization, we freely agreed to fulfil in good faith the international obligations arising from the numerous treaties, conventions and other instruments that have resulted from the comprehensive legislative work accomplished by this Assembly, United Nations agencies and other international organizations and conferences.

However, the provisions of many of these instruments are not being implemented. At times, in a misguided defence of sovereignty, common expectations are thwarted in order to satisfy national interests that frequently are not of decisive importance. Protection of the environment and the law of the sea are good, but not the only examples of areas in which a sharp contrast can be seen between the extensive legislation that exists and the degree of implementation. Consequently, year after year, the competent international agencies and organizations and scientific authorities report the ongoing deterioration of the general environment, the abusive exploitation of natural resources, pollution of the seas and reduction or extinction of marine species.

The question of the fulfilment of obligations assumed is the weak link in the chain of multilateralism. We must seek ways of ensuring respect for international obligations. Over the long term, the satisfaction of common interests is the best way of satisfying the national interest.

Without prejudice to this profession of faith in the United Nations, Uruguay, a country of Latin America, is actively participating in the Organization of American States and in the inter-American system in general. Uruguay is also fully committed to regional integration processes, in particular to the Common Market of the South. We see in these mechanisms a promising avenue to help overcome the difficulties that result from our status as a developing country emerging from the most serious economic crisis of its history and trying to overcome the obstacles preventing it from achieving insertion into the global economy, such as, for example, the huge subsidies that the industrialized countries grant to their agricultural producers.

In this connection, finally, we cannot but mention the recent ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Cancún, whose lack of progress, in our opinion, is a negative signal to a world that is demanding fairer and more balanced rules, especially for countries such as Uruguay, whose economies rely primarily on the production of agricultural goods. We are hopeful that renewed impetus in the negotiations will permit us to achieve positive results in the coming weeks and months in Geneva, to the benefit of the less developed countries and the very future of international trade.

I close my statement conveying my country's satisfaction and pride in seeing you, Sir, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, a friendly country of our region, presiding over this Assembly. I wish you every success in your work.

The President: I now give the floor to His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): My congratulations go to you, Sir, and to the people of Saint Lucia on your election, together with my thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Kavan, for his work over the past year. You have our full support and best wishes in all your efforts to promote the interests of the members of this Assembly.

May I couple these greetings with my great appreciation to our Secretary-General and his staff. We are very grateful indeed for their dedication and service during one of the most difficult years in United Nations history.

In particular, I wish to add once more the deepest sympathy of the Government and people of Brunei Darussalam to the families of Sergio Vieira de Mello and of all who lost loved ones, colleagues and friends in the attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. His Excellency and his staff were our public servants, our representatives and our people. The attack on them was an attack on us all. As such, we condemn it and all other acts of terrorism.

When Brunei Darussalam had the honour of becoming a Member of this Organization, we committed ourselves to two principles. The first was nationhood and all that this implies in terms of the rule of international law and the procedures that govern the affairs of this Assembly. The second was multilateral decision-making and, in turn, all that this also implies — respect for fellow members, sensitivity to their deep concerns and the need for dialogue and consultation as equal partners in the conduct of international affairs, no matter how long and how frustrating the process involved may be.

We continue to maintain our belief in these principles in spite of many disappointments in the past year, both here in the United Nations and earlier this month at the World Trade Organization. We feel that they are the only basis upon which international affairs can be conducted fairly. They apply to all the great political and economic organizations of which we are members and we especially look to the United Nations to uphold them.

By this token, the United Nations is whatever we ourselves make it. We form the largest coalition in history and we share responsibility for its successes and its failures. Among those is our failure to bring in the changes that are necessary if we are to evolve with the times in which we live.

Since 1992, this Assembly has been debating reform. It has the support of a large majority here, including all members of the Non-Aligned Movement. The results of our failure to build on this support can now be clearly seen. Our Security Council has been gravely divided and the past year has left a legacy of bitterness. The consequences for the ordinary people we represent — the people of developing nations year after year, the people of Iraq for the past 10 years or more, and the citizens of Palestine for over half a century — have been ever more disastrous.

In all this time, Members have been well aware that decision-making at the United Nations needs to be more inclusive and genuinely multilateral. On many occasions, they have expressed the desire that the Organization reflect today's world rather than the world of half a century ago. They wish to feel truly part of the decisions it makes.

As it operates now, however, many observers feel that the actual Members of this Organization are too weak to act effectively in solving the great affairs of the day. It is claimed that international affairs are now beyond the control of individual nations. They are global — global finance; global economics; global development; global poverty; global crime; and, of course, global terrorism. Consequently, some voices declare that an Assembly of individual nations, many of them small and still developing, has no power to address such matters.

That is a depressing scenario and, of course, none of us here really wants to believe it, but it does have one merit. It forces us to examine what the United Nations can actually do most effectively and what it can realistically achieve. The reply from too many of our people today would be, we fear: not much. This presents a powerful case for reform.

I therefore feel that we must frankly acknowledge our part in the feelings of hopelessness and frustration that are being voiced by ordinary people and indeed by many Governments. At present, restoring belief in the United Nations ability to act on their behalf may be our most important immediate task. On the one hand, the great world institutions are technically multilateral. They are run by the Governments of the world. Yet, in

fact, many of these Governments feel excluded from the most important decisions. Many interested parties feel that they are also on the outside.

Multilateralism, in other words, appears to have its limits. Beyond them, it seems, the stronger nations take over. This basic division, we hope, can be brought to an end. That is why we were so pleased to hear our Secretary-General emphasize the need for reform in his address last week. We congratulate the Secretary-General on the structural reforms he has overseen. We also thank him for the many times he has kept us in touch with his thinking and that of his staff and we thank him for the hopes he has continued to express about the future of our world Organization.

We still share his optimism. Nevertheless, that feeling can be maintained only if agreement on reform of the whole United Nations system is a real possibility. We accept that the task of bringing about this kind of overall change is extremely hard. The reports of your own Working Group, Mr. President, show a difficult pattern emerging over the past 10 years. There are more and more proposals and basic approaches continually diverge. Even though we largely share the same objectives, we remain divided on the means to achieve them.

The divisions we have seen this year, however, suggest that we cannot keep postponing change. They offer a test of whether the United Nations is indeed capable of evolving. That test must be passed, so we continue to support work on Security Council reform and offer our strong encouragement to the Secretary-General in the proposals he outlined last week.

In the face of today's problems, the United Nations must continue to offer powerful reasons for optimism about the future. We believe that this calls for a determined and united effort to address the root causes of the anger of all who feel unjustly treated. To do this, the United Nations as a whole must be a genuine partnership between nations. It must stand for shared idealism and a shared sense of human justice. That is what no other body can do.

That is what the work of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues was dedicated to. In their memory, and in that of all who have given their lives to this Organization, we all need to do a lot better at working together than we have over the past year.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Godfrey Smith, Attorney-General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Belize.

Mr. Smith (Belize): My delegation celebrates the wisdom of the United Nations in choosing one of our distinguished Caribbean statesmen, Mr. Julian Hunte, to preside over this fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I assure you, Sir, that the energy and industry that you will bring to our work will produce very meaningful results in this very important session.

We continue to be fortunate to have the guidance and strength of our Secretary-General, whose skill and compassion are especially needed today. His words last Tuesday echoed strong and true, and we should all take heed.

And speaking of all, we need to respect the principle of universality of our Organization. The time has come to admit Taiwan to membership of the United Nations. Taiwan has proven itself to be an exemplary member of the international community with a deep sense of solidarity with small and poor nations.

Belize's Prime Minister has said:

> "When we turn our attention to the international stage there is greater cause for anxiety. Let us ask ourselves: After all the developments in building the international system and crystallizing international law from 1945 to the present, which of the following fundamental principles are respected in practice or indeed safe in theory: the peaceful settlement of disputes; the right to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in the internal affairs of States; the right of peoples to have the social and political system of their choice; respect for social, economic and political human rights; not to use force or the threat of force to settle disputes; respect for the international rule of law; abiding by the Charter of the United Nations; and working towards a world governance based on multilateralism and the rule of reason, rather than of force?
>
> "Which of those is safe? Indeed, in the international arena ... we do seem to be in free fall towards barbarism".

Barbarism may not be new, but there does seem to be a greater tolerance for it and we do seem to be

more powerless to contain it. In a world riddled with fear and dominated by terrorism, including State terrorism, we need to concentrate on what needs to be done to save our humanity.

Mr. Rakhmonov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As we contemplate the international arena, with multilateralism under threat and the development of peoples blocked by the practices of the rich and powerful, we can take comfort in one thing — that, yes, in the end ideas are more powerful than arms. And our ideas — we the United Nations of the world — are clearly and powerfully set out in our Charter. Yes, the Charter needs reform; we need urgently to democratize our practice. Small States make up the majority of our membership and elementary democracy demands that we have a greater say than our Charter presently allows us, but the basic principles of the Charter remain valid. The fundamentals are in place.

Article 1 of the Charter states the fundamental purpose of the United Nations: To maintain international peace and security, and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace. Article 24 of the Charter confers on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under Article 42, should the Security Council consider that measures short of the use of force would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action must, of course, be agreed collective action, not unilateral action.

I ask members of the Assembly: Is there any part of that we do not understand? It seems perfectly simple and clear to us small States, which depend on the United Nations Charter and on respect for international principles and international law for our very existence. We are confronted with the question: Are we as an Organization irrelevant? And I say: only if we make ourselves irrelevant. And we do that only if we are determined to self-destruct.

We can call here for many lofty objectives, as contained in our Millennium Development Goals. We can pronounce on the many injustices facing so many peoples and countries in the present world dispensation, but all of that would be futile if our very United Nations should cease to be effective or become irrelevant. That is why I have restricted my statement to one plea to nations large and small, powerful or weak: Keep the United Nations alive, respect its Charter, abide by agreed international principles and international law. That is all we ask, nothing more. Above all, let us not give up what it has cost us so much time and effort, so much blood, to bring to a modest but important stage — our multilateral system.

All civilized nations would surely agree to this plea rather than plunge the world into barbarism. Multilateralism or chaos. Long Live the United Nations!

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr Sathirathai (Thailand): At the outset, I would like to join the international community in paying tribute to the late Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, all United Nations personnel who lost their lives and those wounded by the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. We strongly condemn that cowardly terrorist attack and reaffirm our commitment to supporting the United Nations in paving the way for the stability, security and sovereignty of Iraq.

On behalf of the Government and people of Thailand, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I am confident that, under his wise and exemplary leadership, this session, held at such a difficult time, will lead to a fruitful conclusion. I also wish to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, whose tireless efforts have steered the United Nations along a constructive path during a year of difficult challenges.

This session meets at a most critical juncture or, as the Secretary-General put it in his address: "We have come to a fork in the road" (A/58/PV.7). This road was meant to build a multilateral system to ensure a better world for the human race. It is at this critical juncture that the threats and challenges to multilateralism of the past 12 months have underscored, more than ever, that in order to collectively confront these threats and challenges to global peace, security and prosperity, the

world cannot do without multilateralism. But, as echoed by many from this rostrum, the big question is: how?

As the foremost multilateral institution, the United Nations needs to carry out its mission in the context of these realities. The Secretary-General has expounded his far-sighted initiative for the proposed reforms of the institutions and the establishment of a high-level panel of eminent personalities. Thailand lends its support to the Secretary-General's noble endeavour and hopes that, during the next session, he will come up with a proposal that will take us on the right path.

Many different views, agreements and disagreements have been expressed in this Hall in this general debate. This illustrates that the international community must learn to live with and be tolerant of differences. We may differ in culture, religion and values, but our differences and diversities must not become the sources of hostility. They must be a source of our combined strength to enhance partnership and multilateralism. We believe that the promotion of true partnership and human security will help the United Nations mission in fulfilling its noble goals.

From Timor-Leste to Sierra Leone and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international community can be proud of forging partnership in peacekeeping operations under the framework of the United Nations. Thailand is proud to be one of the 89 countries participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations and wishes to reiterate its commitment to continuing this partnership wherever and whenever needed through its participation in the United Nations standby arrangements system. For its part, Thailand remains firmly committed to supporting United Nations reconstruction and peace-building efforts, as we have done in the past in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan. Thailand has already contributed $250,000 to Iraq through the International Committee of the Red Cross and is committed to providing another $500,000 for dried halal food. Military construction engineers and medical personnel are also being dispatched to Iraq to provide further humanitarian assistance. We hope that peace can eventually reign in the region.

No one deserves peace, stability and a prosperous future more than the peoples of the Middle East. Far too long have the people of that region suffered from violence, acts of terror and despair. We call upon the international community to come together in addressing this problem. All sides must seize the opportunity to embark on the road towards a just and comprehensive peace so that the people of Israel and the people of Palestine can at last live in peace, security and harmony.

Terrorism spares no one, strong or weak, rich or poor. To succeed against terrorism, there is no other way but to be united. The Government of Thailand has worked very closely with the international community to rid the world of this scourge. Domestic legislation has been amended in order to enable Thailand to cope with terrorist activities and to suppress the financing of terrorism more effectively. We take no second chances in our fight against international terrorism.

As freedom from fear and freedom from want are the two major components of human security, it is clear that human security cannot be achieved simply because a country wants to do it all alone. Rather, human security is achieved because all countries decide to do it all together. It is achieved because countries are willing to forge a partnership out of their differences to build strength for human security.

That is why Thailand considers its membership of the Human Security Network an important partnership strength, complementary to the core values of the United Nations for the promotion of peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, humanitarian affairs and international law. Only two weeks ago, Thailand was proud and honoured to have hosted the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It was the first time this Meeting has come to Asia, where land mines are a threat to the security of hundreds of millions of people. Throughout our presidency of the Convention until the first review conference in November 2004, Thailand will do its utmost to ensure much further achievements and considerable progress in the core objectives of the Convention: mine clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and universal acceptance of the Convention.

Across the continent, as one of only three Asian partners for cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Thailand seeks to build bridges between Asia, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and Europe. We believe

that not despite our differences in cultural and social values, but because of those differences, Asia and Europe will learn the art of living together, creating a world of human security.

Narcotic drugs and pandemics transcend all borders and become as much of a threat to human security as terrorism. Like terrorism, decisive and resolute partnership actions at all levels are required to tackle these global problems to achieve sustainable development.

The Thai Government has declared war against narcotic drugs since taking office in February 2001. This year, we made it the peak of our campaign. Our battle against the scourge of drug production and trafficking, especially methamphetamines, must be all but comprehensive. Within the permit of the law, we have mounted an integrated strategic campaign, incorporating prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and suppression. We hope to be able to declare a total victory by the end of the year.

We have forged a more effective partnership with our neighbours and beyond to overcome this global scourge once and for all. This past June, Thailand hosted a five-nation meeting comprising Thailand, China, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to discuss combating transnational crimes, including the issue of drug trafficking. Furthermore, Thailand is also forging partnership at the global level by working hand in hand with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as a partner with shared responsibility to counter drugs and crime in the global context.

Just as drugs tear at the social fabric of societies, diseases such as HIV/AIDS cripple human resources across the globe. Thailand commends the convening of the high-level plenary on HIV/AIDS on 22 September. We support the ongoing efforts undertaken within the framework of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We also remain steadfast in our partnerships with neighbouring countries, particularly the Greater Mekong subregion, as well as with related United Nations agencies, to help tackle the global challenge posed by HIV/AIDS. As host of the Fifteenth International AIDS Conference in July 2004, we look forward to high-level representation of the world community to share the experiences, as well as to forging strong partnerships and cooperation to build a united global front to deal with this pandemic.

With regard to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) — the disease that crippled many countries and affected the tourist industry so badly throughout the world this year — we found that only the prompt response and commitment of ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) partnership enabled us to keep the pandemic under control and quell the panic and fear, which were worse than the disease itself.

The non-traditional security threats of HIV/AIDS, SARS and narcotic drugs — "soft threats", in the words of the Secretary-General — demonstrate once again that no matter what differences each country or region may have, international cooperation and partnership are crucial in order to combat both traditional and non-traditional challenges to human security.

Guided by the principle of deriving partnership strength from diversity, Thailand has embarked on various initiatives to bridge socio-economic disparities at the regional and subregional levels with a view to enhancing peace and prosperity. The Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), which is only in its second year of existence but already comprises 22 Asian countries, representing East, West, South, North and Central Asia, is a prime example. Within one year of its inception, the ACD had achieved considerable progress with regard to various cooperation programmes, even in the area of financial cooperation. The second ACD Ministerial Meeting in June this year adopted the Chiang Mai Declaration on Asian Bond Market Development. The Asian bond market has been heralded as the new financial architecture for the "world of differences".

Thailand continues to work for partnership based on diversity and difference so as to promote socio-economic development among nations. Given the economic disparity among our immediate neighbours, the economic cooperation strategy initiated by the Prime Minister, Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, is the most recent partnership aimed at narrowing the economic gap between Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, with a view to generating employment and income based on comparative advantage and mutual benefits. It will complement other bilateral and regional cooperative frameworks, and serve as a building block towards advancing ASEAN economic integration.

Thailand has chosen the theme, "A World of Differences: Partnership for the Future", for the 2003 meeting of the economic leaders of APEC, scheduled to take place in Thailand in October. The convening of that APEC leaders' meeting reflects the belief that, despite the diversity and differences that exist throughout the region, there is unlimited benefit and potential that can be tapped through effective partnership. The meeting will discuss five sub-themes: a knowledge-based economy; the promotion of human security; financial architecture for a world of differences; small and medium enterprises; and action on development pledges. In addition, we will focus on the issue of counter-terrorism with a view to promoting economic stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The choice of those sub-themes shows that, despite the differences among APEC economies, partnerships on those issues can be forged for the benefit of the region and of the world.

Last year, at the fifty-seventh session, I gave a comprehensive account of Thailand's dual-track strategy to attain steady economic growth with social equity. Before concluding, I would like this morning to report to the Assembly on the success of our efforts to create economic and social partnership. That success is the result of combining the diverse strengths of both the grass-roots economy and the export-led business sector as engines of growth. We are confident that our economy rests on a secure and firm foundation that will lead us along the path of economic growth and sustainable development.

Last year, the Thai economy registered a 5.3 per cent growth in gross domestic product, which was followed by 6.7 percent growth in the first quarter of this year. That is our best economic performance since the 1997 crisis. On 31 July, Thailand paid back all of its International Monetary Fund loans in full — two years ahead of schedule. The Government is committed to the eradication of poverty, as defined by the United Nations, by the year 2009. By placing human security at the forefront of the Government's policies, Thailand is stressing its determination to ensure for the Thai people a society free from want and free from fear.

Living in a world of differences will entail misery if we keep forging conflict out of diversity. It will entail hardship if we keep exacerbating disagreement. It will entail stagnation if we keep failing to make room for compromise. It will entail human suffering if Governments keep turning their backs on chances of partnership. And it will entail devastation if we use our differences as an excuse to always differ.

But we, Members of the United Nations, live in a world of differences. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that our world of differences has a future — a future that will not entail misery, hardship and human suffering as a result of those differences. It is incumbent upon every one of us to work with United Nations institutions so as to ensure that our differences are turned into a source of strength for our future. Thailand is doing its part, and will continue to do so, for such a future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Choe Su Hon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choe Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

I would also like to express appreciation for the efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to strengthen the functions and role of the United Nations, as required under current circumstances.

The political situation today is more unstable than ever. We are confronted by new challenges as we try to make this century one of peace and prosperity for humankind. Countries have been designated, on the basis of extreme national chauvinism and hostility, as part of an axis of evil and as targets of pre-emptive nuclear attacks. Unilateral military attacks are being openly perpetrated against sovereign States under the pretext of the war against terrorism and on the basis of suspicions that they possess weapons of mass destruction.

The principles of respect for sovereignty and sovereign equality are being violated, and international relations plunged into increasingly severe confrontation and antagonism, because of neo-imperialist practices that are based on the supremacy of power.

As we are well aware, this situation is a product of unilateralism, which is compelling countries to be subservient to the high-handedness and unreasonable demands of the super-Power. My delegation is of the view that the pressing common task before States Members of the United Nations is to reject unilateralism and build a new world in which all countries, large and small, coexist peacefully.

I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the principled position and sincere efforts of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to ensure a fair solution to the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, which is now the focus of attention of the international community. I believe that it will be a positive contribution to the work of the current General Assembly.

The nuclear issue is, in its essence, an outcome of the hostile policy pursued by the United States to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea politically, economically and militarily. It originated from this deep-rooted hostility, which denies our system and refuses to co-exist with my country.

My country's consistent position is to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and negotiations. Denuclearizing the Korean peninsula is the ultimate goal, the initiative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the earnest aspiration of the entire Korean nation.

Accordingly, at both tripartite and six-party talks on the nuclear issue, my country advanced proposals aimed at achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The announcement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — United States Joint Statement of 11 June 1993, the adoption of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — United States Agreed Framework on 21 October 1994 and the subsequent process of their implementation have clearly testified to our peace-loving stand and its justness.

The Korean people as well as the entire world welcomed the historic inter-Korean summit meeting in June 2000 and its resultant adoption of the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration. They also sincerely hoped that these developments would lead to peace and stability in the region.

However, the welcome atmosphere and the expectations for peace and stability, raised for a while, suddenly disappeared, and one party has resumed acute confrontation. My country has been singled out as part of an axis of evil and the target of pre-emptive nuclear attack. That was then adopted as a policy and put into action. In particular, following the visit by the United States presidential envoy to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in October 2002, the United States reversed black and white, alleging that my country had admitted to have a secret nuclear weapons programme. It also proceeded to unilaterally halt the supply of heavy fuel oil from November 2002 in violation of the Agreed Framework, and eventually it nullified all the bilateral agreements.

The United States even put pressure upon my country to give up its nuclear programme and accept nuclear inspection with the aim of disarming the country, while openly attempting to overthrow the Government by force. The peace now maintained on the Korean peninsula is entirely thanks to the powerful deterrence to war, which has been built up by our policy of independence, the songun policy. Our deterrence policy is not intended to attack anyone, but to serve as a means of self-defence to safeguard our sovereignty in all intents and purposes.

In order to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue, the hostile policy towards my country should be changed fundamentally. That is the key to the solution of the nuclear issue. At the six-party talks in Beijing in late August, my country set as a goal the abandonment by the United States of its hostile policy towards us in exchange for renunciation of our nuclear programme. To achieve that goal, we proposed to take all necessary measures through a package deal and to work towards the implementation of these measures on a step-by-step basis, following the principle of simultaneous action.

Our proposal contains a detailed account of the package deal and the order of simultaneous action for a comprehensive and fair solution of the nuclear issue, including abandonment of the hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the conclusion of the non-aggression treaty between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, renunciation of the nuclear programme and normalization of bilateral relations.

Simultaneous action is a realistic way to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, and any opposition to it is tantamount to rejecting denuclearization. Other States participating in the Beijing talks also demanded a package solution and simultaneous action, urging a peaceful settlement to the nuclear issue. However, the United States alone repeated its unilateral call for my country's abandonment of nuclear weapons programme first, with no reference to the change of its hostile policy which is the key to the solution of the nuclear issue. The United States even behaved imprudently, asserting that a non-aggression treaty is neither appropriate nor necessary and that it is not interested in such a treaty.

The United States went so far as to insist that if bilateral relations are to be normalized even after my country scraps its nuclear programme, a full range of other issues such as missiles, conventional weapons and human rights should be addressed. In a word, the position of the United States is that it will discuss the steps that it will take only after we have taken every action. Under the present circumstances, in which my country and the United States are levelling guns at each other, asking the other party to put down their guns first does not make any sense. This demand can only be construed as having the ulterior motive of disarming and eliminating my country.

The result of the six-party talks has convinced us once again that the United States is seeking to disarm us by means of pressure and that it is still pursuing the hostile policy of stifling our country. Since it has been proven that the United States is only interested in turning the six-party talks into a ground for completely disarming and eliminating my country by all means, instead of co-existing peacefully with us, we have been compelled not to maintain any interest in or expectations for such talks.

As clearly stated, we have never made any promises with regard to the next round of the six-party talks. All developments concerning the nuclear issue prove well that pressure can never be a means for settlement of the nuclear issue and multiparty talks can be fruitful only when there is commitment to the abandonment of the hostile policy towards my country. Our demand is modest and simple. We just want both sides to drop their guns simultaneously and co-exist peacefully.

Having reaffirmed the position of my Government, which I believe is the most reasonable and just in addressing the nuclear issue, I hope that the President and the United Nations Member States have a correct understanding of our position and actively cooperate for a fair solution of the nuclear issue and for peace on the Korean peninsula and in the region as a whole.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains steadfast in its policy and determination to realize peace and the reunification of Korea and thus contribute to peace and security in the region and in the rest of the world. Thanks to the ideas of national independence and great national unity of the great leader General Kim Jong Il, the inter-Korean summit meeting was held in Pyongyang for the first time since the national division and the North-South Joint Declaration was made public on 15 June 2000. That marked a turning point in accelerating national reunification through the concerted efforts of the entire Korean nation. Despite ups and downs in recent years, there are active efforts to realize independent and peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula under the banner of the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration.

This year alone, a series of North-South ministerial-level talks were held and a groundbreaking ceremony to re-link interrupted railways and roads took place. Reunions of separated families and relatives took place, and various economic exchanges are now under way.

On 15 August, independence day, a splendid national meeting for peace and reunification was held in Pyongyang that demonstrated once again the aspirations and determination of all Korean nationals in the North, the South and overseas for reunification.

The Government and people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will achieve national reconciliation, unity and reunification and contribute to security in the region and the rest of the world by fully implementing the 15 June North-South Joint Declaration, upholding the great idea of the respected General Secretary Kim Jong Il.

An important task before Member States at present is to establish a just and equitable international order and relations, in keeping with the aspirations and desire of all humankind.

To that end, it is important, among others things, to ensure that the principle of respect for sovereignty and equality is fully observed in international relations. Unilateralism and high-handedness should be totally rejected and opposed, as they contravene the Charter and principles of international law.

In order to establish just international relations, the functions and the role of the United Nations must be enhanced and democratized. Democratizing the United Nations means decisively enhancing the authority of the General Assembly and reforming the Security Council.

The General Assembly should be empowered to review resolutions of the Security Council on such issues as sanctions and the use of force directly affecting international peace and security and to submit its relevant recommendations.

Regarding Security Council reform, we believe that priority should be given to ensuring full representation of the non-aligned and other developing countries that constitute an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

Our people graciously celebrated the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 9 September, thus demonstrating the dignity and the might of the Kim Il Sung nation, firmly united single-heartedly around the great leader General Secretary Kim Jong Il.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue, on the basis of independence, peace and friendship — the fundamental ideals of its foreign policy — to contribute actively to international efforts for a just, equitable and new world order by further intensifying cooperation with all Member States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): We have heard the last speaker inscribed on the list for the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.18

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 30 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): It gives my delegation immense satisfaction to see Mr. Julian Hunte in the high office of the presidency, not only because of his wide experience and his proven abilities, but also because Saint Lucia — a small country like Bhutan — has assumed leadership of the General Assembly at this critical juncture of its history. We are confident that, under his able leadership and guidance, our deliberations on the many important and challenging issues that confront our world today will be fruitful. Let me also take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Jan Kavan for his excellent stewardship of the fifty-seventh session. His presidency enhanced the esteem of the international community both for himself personally and for the Czech Republic.

My delegation would like to pay a special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamic leadership and his tireless efforts to revitalize the United Nations and to enable it to assume its rightful role at a very challenging time in our history.

We have gathered in this magnificent Hall year after year, bound together by a common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and just world. The end of the cold war renewed our hope to bring to fruition our collective aspirations, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The historic Millennium Summit ushered in a sense of optimism that we could bring about a world free from want and fear. Unfortunately, the horrific events of 11 September have shaken the very foundations of our nascent faith in our ability to deliver a new era of peace and prosperity. The situation in Iraq is a serious challenge to the international community. Three years ago, we stood united and confident about the prospects in the new millennium, providing a ray of hope for millions around the world. Today, sadly, we stand as a house divided, uncertain about the future and unsure whether we can rid the world of the vicious circle of conflict, poverty and fear that has plagued humankind for centuries.

It is clear that international peace and security and the eradication of poverty remain the most pressing challenges confronting the international community. What must be recognized is the undeniable, but often overlooked, fact that those overarching goals are interlinked and cannot be achieved in isolation. There can be no prosperity without peace and security. At the same time, peace and security cannot be sustained if billions are deprived of the basic necessities of life. Our collective resolve to combat the menace of terrorism must be matched with an equal commitment

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to eradicate the scourge of poverty, which afflicts more than half of the world's population.

We welcome the President's intention to focus the Assembly's efforts on implementation of the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals. The realization of a new economic order that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable is an imperative that must be pursued with renewed focus and resolve. The Millennium Declaration provides a clear set of targets and steps to be undertaken to achieve them. The Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Development Agenda and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development provided further impetus towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Yet 33 countries that together account for 26 per cent of the world's population are reported to be off track on more than half of the Goals. The lack of progress so far is indeed disconcerting.

While emphasizing the need to accelerate the implementation of commitments made by both developed and developing countries at various international conferences, my delegation would like to highlight the critical need for adequate financing mechanisms through trade, investment and official development assistance. In particular, my delegation hopes that the special needs and vulnerabilities of the least developing countries, of the landlocked developing countries and of the small island developing States will be comprehensively addressed, as called for in the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, in the Almaty Declaration and in the Barbados Plan of Action, respectively.

Of the 33 countries that are off track in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 23 are in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the need for special attention to Africa. My delegation calls on the international community to lend its full support to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. International support is particularly crucial for countries emerging from conflicts, for without the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure, progress in peacemaking cannot be sustained. In that context, we hope that the international community will also provide the necessary support to the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq as they endeavour to rebuild their nations under the most trying circumstances.

Every Member State has the responsibility to eradicate poverty and create an enabling environment for peace and security. It is in the mutual interest of all nations, small or large, developed or developing, to collectively promote global prosperity and peaceful coexistence.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nagoum Yamassoum, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Yamassoum (Chad) (*spoke in French*): As in the past, and despite present ordeals, Chad, my country, is very glad to take active part in this meeting of peoples united by the same fate and motivated by the same spirit of peace, justice and equality.

I am convinced that the wise choice of someone with the experience and requisite skills of Mr. Julian Hunte to preside over this historic meeting will guarantee the success of the session. My country has assumed similar responsibilities within the previous Bureau and knows just how consuming yet exalting they can be. My delegation would also like to express its encouragement and congratulations to Mr. Hunte and other members of the Bureau. My delegation and I, personally, would like to assure him of our complete availability and full support for the success of his mission. We would like to reiterate our deep gratitude to him and especially to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, for the skill and enthusiasm with which he led the Assembly during the fifty-seventh session.

Allow me also to express to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan our sympathy and admiration for the courage and the firm resolve that he places at the service of the ideals and causes of the United Nations, which is now confronting many exceptional challenges.

Finally, the Government of Chad would like to associate itself with other members of the international community to condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks against the United Nations offices in Iraq, which claimed the lives of several staff members of the United Nations, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. These heinous acts of violence should in no way break our resolve to pursue the noble goals of our Organization, foremost among which is to help peoples in difficulty to fully regain their rights to lead

their lives in conformity with the values of freedom, democracy and justice.

I would therefore like to extend the condolences of the Chadian Government to all United Nations personnel, and the Brazilian, Egyptian and other Governments for the deaths of those who sacrificed themselves for the freedom of others.

If the international community has been thoroughly overhauled since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war, it has been victim to a new kind of trauma since 11 September 2001. Since that time, terrorism has been a dire threat to international peace and security. Globalization has complicated the rules of the game in trade between the North and the South, and new forms of conflict have emerged at the regional level.

The best response to all this must be based on collective and joint action. As a full member of the international community, Chad, which is faithful to its quest for peace, strongly reaffirms its resolute condemnation of any act of terrorism, act of violence or any use of force — in the defence of any cause — to resolve disputes among nations.. Such actions must be dealt with by our regional organizations first and foremost, and, if they fall short, to our common Organization, the United Nations. Although it has been the subject of some controversy, the United Nations continues to be the only Organization in the world to truly enjoy international legitimacy.

But to continue to best ensure that its mission and functions are carried out and to maintain its legitimacy, our Organization must enjoy the full support of all Member States. We must all contribute to assisting it in regaining its principal mission. The United Nations must once again become a common tool for us all and no longer be seen as showcase, much less a sounding board, for the will and power of the few.

It will undoubtedly achieve this goal all the more easily if the long-postponed reforms are successful and reflected in the enlargement of the Security Council to include new or emerging Powers of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas — in sum, in recognition of the true state of the world today. This would do justice to those nations and render a service to the Organization itself.

In that respect, the Iraqi crisis has only further convinced us of the need to pursue those reforms. We cannot continually evade this crucial issue. Stability and international peace and security are at stake, for the kind of globalization that our peoples seek cannot evolve in the interest of all if the international political system is predominantly unilateral in nature.

Pending this revolution, which all peoples who cherish justice ardently seek, we still note with satisfaction that our Organization remains active in all crisis areas, particularly in Africa, where we urge it to be more proactive. Indeed, Africa is confronted with many difficulties that have ensued from both wars and other crises, as well as from a lack of good governance. The recent establishment of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) promises to save the continent from the economic quagmire in which it has been plunged. But the coherence of this extensive programme is connected with the support of the entire international community. The anticipated outcome will depend on true solidarity on the part of all economies worldwide.

My country, which has been committed to the path of democratic pluralism since 1 December 1990, has made significant progress. These efforts will be sustained until we have perfected the republican institutions provided for under the Constitution of 31 December 1996. The Government of Chad believes it important that this democratic process be achieved so that the rule of law and also peace and prosperity, which are the ultimate goals, might be attained.

To that end, in 1999 the President of our Republic promulgated, a unique type of law that sets out modalities for the use of oil revenues. This has resulted in a system in which a substantial part of this direct income —10 per cent — is set aside for future generations, and the remaining 80 to 90 per cent remainder goes to priority sectors — those vital areas I mentioned earlier — and the region of production receives 5 per cent.

Secondly, the law provides for an office for the control and surveillance of oil income. It is made up of nine members, including only one representing the Government, with five representing civil society and two the Parliament. As an independent body, that office will have broad powers and prerogatives, including authorizing expenditures from oil revenue and verification of their proper use.

In this new international context, in which States are increasingly interdependent and in which the world

has truly become a village, Chad, while addressing its internal problems, is endeavouring to open itself to the outside world. It is following with great interest developments in the international political situation and is working to make its modest contribution to the efforts of the international community in settling conflicts, especially in Africa.

Therefore, we note with satisfaction, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the new awareness of the parties involved and the emerging understanding, by the Congolese people themselves, of the enlightened self-interest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We fervently hope that the transition process will continue uninterrupted until the final return of stability to that fraternal country.

In the Central African Republic, realities in the field have shown positive change, but it is up to our Central African brothers to close their ranks to an even greater extent in order to consolidate peace in their country. The national dialogue under way offers them an excellent opportunity for a deep and constructive process of reflection on ways of bringing about national reconciliation.

With respect to our border with the Sudan, we welcome most particularly the prospects for peace that have been emerging in that long-suffering country. Accords were concluded on 3 September 2003 under the auspices of President Idriss Deby at Abeche in Chad, between the Government of the Sudan and the People's Liberation Army of the Sudan, and the protocol on security questions signed on 25 September between the Government and the SPLA also is a welcome development on the path to peace. Chad encourages the two parties to do their utmost to conclude a genuine peace agreement that would put an end to the sufferings of that fraternal country.

We note with satisfaction a trend towards peace and stability in West Africa. For us, the Ivorian crisis was a serious cause for concern. The Marcoussis agreements gave rise to a real hope finally to see a peaceful solution emerge. Today all eyes are turned to Abidjan, where the Transitional Government has the heavy responsibility of conducting national reconciliation in the interest of all the children of that country. Chad encourages the Ivorian people to help the Transitional Government to carry out its mission, so that peace might be consolidated in Côte d'Ivoire.

With regard to Liberia, we hope that, with continued international assistance, its situation will become stabilized. The participation of the countries of the subregion in peacekeeping operations and the presence of the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia in Monrovia all give rise to hope and are a guarantee of political stability. The adoption of resolution 1497 (2003) was very timely. It represents a framework for settlement which should be used finally to break the infernal cycle of violence in that country. We would therefore like to ask the parties to the conflict to overcome their differences and work towards the return of a just and lasting peace.

I cannot conclude my words on Africa without joining my voice to those of other delegations that spoke earlier from this rostrum and welcoming finally the wise decision of the Security Council to lift the embargo that for years had penalized the fraternal people of Libya.

Outside of Africa, other hotbeds of tension remain, especially in the Near and Middle East, that require the involvement of the international community in the quest for adequate solutions. In the Middle East, the Israeli-Arab conflict has long been one of the concerns of the United Nations. Today conditions seem to have been met for a constructive dialogue between the two neighbouring peoples, since the road map containing the peace plan was agreed to by the parties to the conflict. This peace plan will, it is hoped, allow Palestine to achieve, by the year 2005, national independence and international sovereignty.

Regarding the Middle East, the Republic of Chad welcomes the interest shown by the international community in the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty and independence. We hope that the process of restoring power to the Iraqis will continue pursuant to Security Council resolution 1483 (2003) in a way that best serves the interests of the Iraqi people.

In East Asia, the question of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, territorial conflicts and terrorist attacks are jeopardizing stability, not just for States in the region but for the entire world. Nevertheless, we are pleased to note that a dynamic for peace has definitely begun to prevail in that region. We welcome, therefore, the holding of multilateral talks on the North Korean nuclear programme, and we encourage States in the region, whose role in this respect is crucial, to

become truly involved in order to facilitate the quest for a final settlement of that crisis.

We welcome also with relief the significant improvement that has taken place in the context of relations between India and Pakistan. This favourable climate will no doubt enable the two nuclear Powers to maintain good-neighbourly relations and to undertake the true problems of development.

Above and beyond these conflicts, which are all of great concern, there remain two major issues with which the international community has not dealt with courageously, in spite of good intentions and of the resolutions adopted in various forums beginning with the Millennium Summit. I am speaking of development assistance and of the fight against HIV/AIDS. Both are Millennium Development Goals with respect to which commitments were entered into here, in June 2001, at the special session on HIV/AIDS, and at Monterrey in March 2002.

While it is encouraging to note that the heads of State or Government of the Group of Eight, at their most recent Summit in May 2003, gave their support to the achievement of those goals, they still have to translate such commitments into action, as was emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization.

That means, inter alia, that developed States should implement the outcome of the Monterrey Consensus and the results of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002. But the conclusions of the most recent World Trade Organization (WTO) Conference in Cancún have shown that we have not yet embarked on that path.

We must all translate into action the Summit's resolutions on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Indeed, in spite of the increase in resources and the strengthening of the political commitment at the highest level — following the example of the commitment made by the President of the Republic of Chad — the situation remains one of great concern and calls for unfailing determination and exceptional efforts in order to stem this pandemic. I would almost say that we must invent a new kind of containment in order to stem the spread of this disease.

In any case, the disease is waging a brutal war against humankind, which must respond by utilizing the means required to fight a global war. This is a prerequisite for the survival of many nations throughout the world and therefore for the stability of our future world.

I cannot conclude without drawing the attention of the international community to the crucial issue of the representation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in our Organization. That country has diplomatic relations and relations of cooperation with many Member States, including Chad. Paradoxically, however, with regard to the United Nations, it finds itself without any status. Its ostracism is unjustified and unjustifiable.

Indeed, the Republic of China was one of the founders of the United Nations and was represented here from 1949 through 1971. The fact that this item comes up each and every year in the debates of the General Assembly proves that a substantive issue is at stake. Chad deems it inadmissible for 23 million Taiwanese to be discriminated against by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It is thus unfortunate to note that, in the current context, the World Health Organization, for example, cannot lend Taiwan assistance in the event of epidemics, which was recently the case with severe acute respiratory syndrome. Yet the Taiwanese also have the right to live in serenity, to lead a democratic life and to be in solidarity with the world's other peoples. They need peace — the very foundation of democracy and a condition for development. Peace presupposes the resolution of conflicts through mediation. That implies, in both hearts and minds, a culture of tolerance and respect for differences.

We urge this session to put an end to Taiwan's exclusion by restoring its status as a full-fledged United Nations Member, and we take this opportunity to invite all States in the region to halt the military escalation.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kokou Tozoun, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Tozoun (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Again this year, we are meeting to assess our actions and to define approaches that can breathe new life into the Organization. Far from becoming a routine, our annual meeting is the high point in the life of the Organization, in that it offers to each Member State, through a frank and constructive debate, an opportunity

to make its contribution to the building of peace and security, which are indispensable to the just and lasting development of our countries. It is also an opportunity for us to reaffirm the paramount role of the United Nations in the world and to find appropriate ways to strengthen the Organization further.

Before I proceed, let me express — on behalf of the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, and of the Government and the people of Togo, whom I have the honour to represent at this rostrum — my warm congratulations on the election of Mr. Julian Hunte as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. They can be assured of the full availability and cooperation of the Togolese delegation. I should also like to express our appreciation and profound gratitude to Mr. Hunte's predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, who led the work of the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly with dexterity and skill. To the Secretary-General, we reaffirm how much we admire him for the work that he continues to lead at the head of the Organization.

This General Assembly session is taking place at a particular time of evolution for the United Nations. Indeed, in the light of the grave events being experienced by today's world, the United Nations needs more than ever before to be strengthened so that it can fully accomplish the primary tasks entrusted to it by the Charter: inter alia, maintaining international peace and security and serving as a forum where the efforts of nations can be harmonized towards the achievement of collective development and shared well-being. It is obvious that the Organization's purposes and principles retain all their relevance and remain guideposts for action on the part of the international community.

In my delegation's view, this session must intensify its reflection with a view to defining new approaches that will enable the United Nations to search for more viable and lasting solutions to the problems of peace, security and development, which daily challenge the entire international community. We must therefore support United Nations actions, especially at a time when peoples are aspiring to more freedom and democracy and to greater involvement in the management of civic affairs.

The democratic wind that is blowing through our country is far more than an irresistible movement for renewal; it holds immense hopes for our people. For Togo, that is what has justified the people's support for the political reform that the Government has been undertaking for more than a decade and a half. Here, I should like to recall the faith and determination with which the Togolese Government — spurred on by of its head of State — is striving to build a democratic society that will take everyone's legitimate aspirations into account and that is rooted in the country's sociological realities. In essence, we are engaged in this democratization process in the conviction that the task — which will be long-term — requires much resolve, patience and self-sacrifice.

From this rostrum, I should like to stress that, through the recent presidential election — which was free, honest and fair in the general view of observers — a broad majority of the Togolese people demonstrated their political maturity and their keen sense of the general interest, which must take precedence over partisan and personal interests. In any event, I can assure the Assembly that the Togolese people — who know how to go the extra mile — are determined to move forward. The Government, for its part, is resolved to continue the process of democratization and establishing the rule of law, strengthening its foundations through the local and senatorial elections whose preparations are now under way.

One can never emphasize enough that the difficulties related to the whole democratization process are not limited to one country or to a specific group of countries; they are inherent in any endeavour whose objective is to involve people in the management of public affairs. The path towards democracy is long and fraught with pitfalls, but we are working tirelessly to provide the country with democratic institutions which are indispensable to the proper functioning under a rule of law. The quest for democracy — a contemporary development that Togo fully endorses — is a complex undertaking that requires time. Indeed, democracy can take shape only in an environment of peace and security, which alone can guarantee gradual assimilation of democratic values that are well understood and that emanate from the wisdom of the culture and traditions of the peoples concerned. In that spirit, Togo is striving to establish the rule of law in the hope that we will be understood by our partners.

Today, we can affirm that, despite the difficulties besetting our march towards the establishment of democracy, encouraging and concrete results have been achieved. Above and beyond institutional development, ensuring full human rights in all their aspects is a paramount necessity. Here, we wish to emphasize the Togolese Government's primary concern to guarantee and promote the economic, social and cultural rights of all Togolese citizens. The realization of those rights is of particular importance, for in them lie the interests of democracy and the stability of the Republic's institutions.

Indeed, if one takes a careful look at Africa's contemporary history, one will note that the many sudden changes and various attempts challenging democratic institutions in some countries result less from a misunderstanding of the democratic process than from the economic and financial difficulties felt by various social strata. The success of the democratic undertaking is therefore a function of the economic possibilities of the States that are engaged in it, and establishing institutions requires considerable resources that our countries cannot muster at the current stage of their development without foreign aid. If that observation is universally shared, why impose sanctions against — and suspend cooperation with — a country that, like many other States, has encountered difficulties in implementing its democratization policy and is undertaking notable efforts to establish the rule of law? Does my country, Togo, deserve the treatment that it has received for the past 10 years?

I would like, once again, to appeal for the resumption of cooperation with Togo. That is the appeal of an entire people. Peace and security, which reign in Togo, and the outstanding efforts to ensure economic and social development, despite the suspension of aid, clearly support the expectations of the Togolese people.

While the elimination of poverty is considered an essential task to be tackled to help a people or a country rebuild, it is also the same thing as giving it the means to consolidate democracy, which is essential to build a more just and peaceful world.

The need for solidarity, justice and equity must lead the international community, particularly the European Union and other development partners, to reconsider their position and to commit to supporting the reconstruction effort in Togo, a country that has made peace and security the very foundation of its internal and external policies.

That said, Togo believes firmly that the use of sanctions, if not properly measured and without time limits, will only increase people's poverty, particularly that of women, the elderly and children. Such sanctions provide, therefore, fertile ground for disorder and anarchy. The Assembly must, therefore, think about this question more deeply.

Our faith in peace and security is reflected in the concrete results of a bold and visionary economic policy, which is carried out untiringly, despite adverse times. This conviction is also justified by the fact that peace and social cohesion remain, undoubtedly, the basic factors, without which any socio-economic development would be carried out ineffectively and with only illusory results. Peace and security are, therefore, priorities for all countries, whether they are in Africa or elsewhere in the world.

At the African level, the head of State of Togo is very engaged in the process of conflict settlement. By way of example, let me recall prior outstanding and effective mediation efforts in which he played a role in settling crises that have afflicted Chad, Sierra Leone, the Great Lakes region, Guinea-Bissau and, most recently, Côte d'Ivoire.

Regarding its contribution to peacekeeping operations, I wish to recall that Togo is contributing in a meaningful and active way to the deployment of military or police contingents at the subregional level or in United Nations peacekeeping operations; in Namibia in 1989, in Rwanda in 1993, in Haiti in 1993, in the Central African Republic in 1997, in Guinea-Bissau in 1999, and recently in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

With regard to Liberia, we welcome the establishment by the Security Council, on 19 September 2003, of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, which will be deployed on 1 October — in just a few hours. It will contribute to supporting in a meaningful way the peacekeeping force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

My country, which contributed to restoring that peace by sending a contingent, urges the wealthy countries to contribute to financing the United Nations

force in order to provide it with the necessary means to accomplish its mission.

In the Great Lakes region, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Togolese Government hopes ardently that the new stage, characterized by the establishment of a new Government and other transitional institutions, will lead to stability, unity and national reconciliation.

In Burundi, my country welcomed the significant progress made on the basis of the Arusha Agreement, and it urges the parties to the conflict to work resolutely toward restoring peace to the country. Togo is very involved in the settlement of disputes in Africa, demonstrating clearly its firm determination to contribute to maintaining and to consolidating peace in the African continent. It was in that context that the President of the Togolese Republic advocated the establishment of an African peacekeeping force at the 1994 summit of the Organization of African Unity.

It is worth noting that that idea made headway in the Organization of African Unity, as is attested by the adoption at Durban, South Africa, of a protocol on the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which demonstrates the determination of Africans to be the builders themselves of peace in Africa. It is also comforting to note that, within the context of that protocol, the establishment of a pre-positioned African peace force and a continental early warning system are taking shape.

My country is committed to making its contribution to the implementation of this collective approach to questions of defence, peace and security in Africa, and calls on the international community to firmly support the African continent with a view to guaranteeing the success of this effort.

Outside of Africa, we are constantly watching Iraq and the Middle East, always in the grip of violence. Regarding the Middle East in particular, my country considers that the definitive settlement of the Palestinian question, which is at the heart of the conflict in the region, necessarily requires the cessation of violence and counter-violence and consideration of the legitimate rights of both people — the right of Israel to live in full security within internationally recognized borders and that of the Palestinian people to fully enjoy their national rights, including the establishment of a State.

In that context, we encourage Israelis and Palestinians to pursue dialogue, with a view to achieving a negotiated and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question.

Despite a new environment conducive to economic expansion, poverty continues to increase and remains a striking and paradoxical feature of our era. Peace and security will constantly be threatened if measures of justice are not adopted to push back the borders of poverty that weaken the foundations of our society.

The economic situation of developing countries, particularly in Africa, is a matter of great concern. The external debt burden, instability in export income and the devastating effects stemming from deterioration in terms of trade have largely contributed to aggravating the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in many African countries.

Speaking of international trade, it is unfortunate to note that, despite liberalization of the economy, industrialized countries continue to practice protectionist measures in the industrial and agricultural sectors. These measures, particularly harmful to developing countries, particularly African countries, impede the efforts made to restore increased export income.

Like many other delegations, Togo demands, therefore, that protectionist practices and subsidies be ended. That would contribute significantly to the development of poor countries. We believe that globalization must be accompanied by a greater spirit of solidarity and by a policy aimed at the purchase of products from the South at fairer and more lucrative prices.

In that regard, the Togolese Government wishes to emphasize that, if they are to benefit all, the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) must take into account the deep aspirations of developing countries, which demand that they be able to participate in international trade in conditions of equality and justice, as recently emphasized at Cancún.

At a time when our continent is doing its utmost to make the African Union the priority instrument to ensure peace and security and economic and social prosperity, the international community must become more involved to assist economic recovery efforts of

our States, in order to meet the challenges they face, such as poverty, the AIDS pandemic and malaria.

It is important that our common Organization mobilize its efforts even more in order to fight the evils that afflict the world and make it vulnerable. Terrorism would definitely be included among those evils. The terrible events of 11 September 2001 and the recent deadly attacks against the United Nations headquarters in Iraq and elsewhere, still alive within us, compel us to act promptly to eradicate this evil. My country, which has frequently been the victim of terrorist aggression, in 1977, 1985, 1986, 1993, 1994 and 1998, recognizes the importance of that challenge. This task should be one of our highest priorities if we wish to give future generations a sound world, in which respect for human dignity, love and fraternity are the foundation.

In order to achieve those aims, the United Nations must assume greater responsibility and provide more resources. It certainly needs to be substantially reformed. We would like to welcome the relevant proposals of the Secretary-General to establish a panel of eminent personalities from civil society to address this issue. We remain convinced that our actions, taken together, will lead to the reign of a society free from selfishness, violence, terrorism, disease and the threat of nuclear confrontation. May the work of this session lead each of our States to resolutely follow the path towards peace and ensure that all peoples, without discrimination, can enjoy the fruits of progress made by humanity in a climate of tolerance, justice, fraternity and solidarity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Hidipo Hamutenya, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hamutenya (Namibia): Mr. President, my delegation congratulates you on your assumption of this high office. We are confident that, given your vast experience and consummate diplomatic skill, you will be able to successfully manage the proceedings of this session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express our appreciation for the excellent and effective manner in which your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, conducted the work of the fifty-seventh session. In the same vein, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in resolving the world's burning issues.

Allow me also to pay tribute to the international workers who have recently given their lives in service to the United Nations in Iraq. In particular, we reiterate our condolences to the Secretary-General and the Organization for the tragic death of Sergio Vieira de Mello, that outstanding servant of the United Nations.

As we condemn terrorism and violence in all their forms and manifestations, we honour the memory of Anna Lindh, the slain Foreign Minister of Sweden, who dedicated her life to the pursuit of peace, development and social progress.

We appear here before this Assembly every year to renew our vow to the United Nations as the main guarantor of international peace and security. The speeches that we deliver here are a distilled expression of our collective passion for and conviction about the ideals that the United Nations stands for.

Yet, at times, as was the case with the war on Iraq, the United Nations gets sidelined and the unique legitimacy of its authority undermined through unilateral actions. Such actions produced a general feeling of fear and uncertainty, especially among the small and weak nations of the world. This is why the central theme that runs through nearly all the speeches at this session is the call for a return to multilateral dialogue, persuasion and collective action as the only appropriate approach to resolving the many conflicts facing the international community. Being a small country, Namibia echoes this call. Multilateralism must be the basis of global security, if smaller countries are not to feel that they are at the mercy of stronger ones. But, as recent events have demonstrated, big Powers, like the smaller ones, also need a multilateral framework as a more reassuring environment for the execution of foreign policy.

The President took the Chair.

We cannot fail to re-emphasize the inseparable link between international security and economic development. Therefore, the Organization must uphold the commitments made in the field of economic development, especially the important pledges made at the Millennium Summit and contained in the Millennium Declaration.

In that Declaration, world leaders committed themselves to help lift half of the world's poor out of misery and deprivation by the year 2015. We are talking here of 1.5 billion people around the world who

are today victims of abject poverty and 800 million who are starving. Still more, we are talking about the 900 million adults worldwide who are illiterate.

The tragedy is that this human misery is acquiring deepening and broadening dimensions at a time when human ingenuity is ever enlarging the horizons of possibilities of doing away with this terrible scourge of extreme poverty and deprivation. Clearly, therefore, the implementation of the Millennium Declaration is a race against time. Failure to act now, and to do so with a sense of urgency, will mean that we, especially the rich of this world, have failed to rise to the moral and political challenge, which is to protect that most sacred of all human rights, the right to life.

Namibia is fully committed to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. To this end, we allocate 23 per cent of our annual national budget to education and 15 per cent to health. In this commitment to invest in our people, we have proceeded from the premise that a fundamental way to address the problem of poverty is to improve the productive competitiveness of our economy, and that improving that competitiveness is dependant on the rapid increase in the knowledge, skills and capacities of the people, with a view to empowering them to be able to escape from the trap of poverty. Skills in the field of information technology are a critical element of our human resources development programme.

The other urgent challenge, spelled out in the Millennium Declaration, is the fight against the AIDS pandemic. Namibia is devoting considerable resources and attention to this seemingly daunting battle to contain the spread and limit the impact of this epidemic on our society. In this effort, we are working with other countries, relevant United Nations agencies, the private sector and members of civil society. In the context of this battle, the plight of AIDS orphans is given priority. However, there is a need for more generous contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

In the pursuit of Millennium Development Goals, Namibia is, furthermore, working closely with its partners in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to implement a number of key regional projects. One of these is a major power project, involving the power utilities of Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa and Namibia.

Similarly, Namibia, together with Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, has embarked on one of the world's largest regional wildlife conservation and tourism development projects. The geographical scope of this area cuts across the territories of all five countries and covers approximately 278,000 square kilometres.

We would like, therefore, to reassure the Secretary-General that Namibia has, indeed, started in earnest on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and is staying the course. However, as I said earlier, there is still a great need for additional resources so that we can intensify our efforts aimed at development and poverty eradication.

For more than a decade now, the overwhelming majority of Member States, including Namibia, have been calling for the reform of the institutions of the Organization, especially the Security Council.

At the time of the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the Organization consisted of only 51 Member States. That number has now grown to 191 sovereign States. But the structure of the United Nations has remained in some respects unchanged.

The Security Council needs to become democratic and more representative — allowing other regions and States to be represented. There is a broad consensus that by making it a democratic body, and more representative, we would give the Security Council greater legitimacy and that that, in turn, would mean more effective United Nations machinery.

This call for reform is in line with the principle of democratic governance so often demanded of the developing countries by, among others, some of the Powers that occupy permanent seats in the Security Council.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General has taken on board the reform of the United Nations, and that it is one of the higher priorities on his agenda. We have noted with great interest his plan to set up a panel of eminent personalities to look into the reform process and recommend ways of effecting such a reform.

One of the issues that underlines the need for the urgent reform of the Security Council is the pathetic inability of that organ to bring the authority of the United Nations to bear on the situation in the Middle East. The unrelenting carnage that is taking place in

that region has not compelled the Powers that be to accept the fact that that situation constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Because of a lack of political will in the Security Council, there has been no ability to act collectively to put a stop to the carnage.

The continued occupation of the Palestinian territory exacerbates frustration and despair among the Palestinians. It follows, therefore, that the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel, is key to peace and stability in that region.

The implementation of the Security Council's plan for Western Sahara would have closed the chapter on decolonization in Africa. The right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence is a Charter obligation that we cannot shirk.

We hail the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia and welcome the establishment of the United Nations Mission in that country. Guided by our commitment to African solidarity and given the resolve of the African Union to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, Namibia has decided to contribute troops to the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

Geographic proximity is not a matter of choice. We abhor the continued imposition of the United States embargo against the people of Cuba, and call on the international community to demand the immediate lifting of that embargo.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the vital importance of international cooperation by all stakeholders in our effort to realize the Millennium Development Goals. In order to reduce the scourge of poverty and underdevelopment, developing countries need access to the markets of developed countries.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to overcome the impasse which has developed as result of the failure of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference at Cancún. We need to emphasize that urgent need. We call on the developed countries to demonstrate a spirit of compromise in line with their undertakings at the Millennium Summit.

Furthermore the implementation of the decisions taken at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development must not be allowed to become a dead letter. The promise made by world leaders at the Millennium Summit to give globalization a human face should also be given practical expression.

In short, the vision of a bright and prosperity-enhancing new Millennium must not be allowed to become a mirage or a dream that could not be realized.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sodiq Safoev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Safoev (Uzbekistan): I should like first of all to join earlier speakers in congratulating you, Sir, The Honourable Julian Robert Hunte, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, on your election as President of the General Assembly and to wish you every success as you carry out your duties. I would also like to extend our appreciation to Mr. Jan Kavan for the very efficient way in which he organized the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

We would like at the outset to express our profound condolences to the whole family of the United Nations for the loss of Sergio Vieira de Mello, a brave and able diplomat, and the other United Nations personnel who died as a result of the deadly attack against the United Nations premises in Baghdad.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline the position of Uzbekistan on the key issues on the agenda of this forum. As is well known, since the events of 11 September 2001, the world has been on the verge of a fundamental transformation caused by new challenges and threats to security in many regions of our planet. This harsh reality unequivocally increases the responsibility of the United Nations as a unique international institution whose role cannot be substituted by anyone or anything. It also increases the responsibility of each and every nation to preserve peace and stability in countering threats to modern civilization such as international terrorism, extremism, and the ever-growing illegal drug trade.

Given our immediate proximity to Afghanistan, we, the nations of Central Asia, know at first hand what these threats are and what they can bring to the world, if timely steps are not taken to prevent and eliminate them at their very core. In this context, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of the actions of the international anti-terrorist coalition led by the United States of America and of the International Security Assistance Force, which are doing so much to

revive and restore peace and stability in long-suffering Afghanistan.

In the meantime, despite the prerequisites for a full-scale peace process in Afghanistan and sustained development of the region, the peace in the country is still fragile. We believe that the resources of the international community, major international organizations and donor nations, as well as the capabilities of neighbouring countries, should be more intensely engaged, as they are essential to post-conflict reconstruction.

Afghanistan should become a harmoniously integrated part of Central Asia, and this will positively contribute to the enhancement of stability and security in the country and region. In view of the exceptional importance of the socio-economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is rendering assistance to the Afghan people in the reconstruction of damaged roads and the construction of new ones, as well as supplying electricity to the northern provinces of Afghanistan. Uzbek specialists have built eight large bridges along the road from Mazari Sharif to Kabul. Uzbekistan is also delivering humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. More than 1 million tonnes of humanitarian cargo have been shipped through our country's territory. We will continue to cooperate with international organizations, foremost with the United Nations, in this regard.

The lessons learned in recent years have confirmed that overcoming the consequences of terrorism and extremism is more difficult than their timely prevention. Moreover, the aggressive drive of terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction has become a new reality. The international community should confront these far-reaching plans using an effective and streamlined system of measures to prevent access by terrorists to arms, new technologies, and dual-use material.

Uzbekistan welcomes the progress made in the development of legal instruments aimed at combating international terrorism. Tangible results, however, can be achieved only by creating a global system of comprehensive cooperation. That is why we support the work of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. We are confident that the regional anti-terrorism centre of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established to collaborate with other similar centres, will prove to be an important component of the global anti-terrorist system.

To combat the threat of international terrorism and extremism, it is important to confront the hotbeds all over the world of extremism and the dissemination of the ideology of fanatical ideologies. Despite current measures to isolate them, these centres still possess substantial financial resources and the capacity to influence the hearts and minds of young people and mobilize them for their far-reaching objectives. In addition to the measures being implemented today, it would be desirable to establish a special United Nations programme to promote education and awareness among young people and develop in them a strong aversion to extremist ideology.

Uzbekistan maintains that the United Nations can and must play a more significant role in resolving the most urgent issues of today's world. For this purpose, first and foremost, United Nations programmes must become more concrete and effective so that they can better target the real needs of regions. In this regard, I would like to present the following views.

First, Uzbekistan unequivocally supports further development of regional integration and considers the Organization of Central Asian Cooperation (OCAC) as a crucial mechanism of multilateral collaboration among the States of the region. We consider the Organization's economic component, as well as the establishment of water, energy, transport and communication consortia within its framework, as a priority.

The need to overcome the isolation of the region in terms of transport and communication is of utmost importance among the objectives vital for sustainable development of the Central Asian States. In this context, I would particularly like to draw Members' attention to the multilateral initiative to establish a trans-Afghan transport corridor, which would provide landlocked nations that encounter difficulties in accessing world markets with new access to seaports. Undoubtedly, the implementation of this project would boost trade and economic ties and fundamentally change geopolitical and economic realities in the region.

We believe it is high time for relevant United Nations agencies, above all the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, to develop programmes aimed at increasing the volume of aid to

the region's States and Afghanistan for the purpose of developing transport infrastructure and providing real support in communications projects.

Secondly, Uzbekistan calls for strict compliance by all nations with a global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Today, in our view, the significance of the initiative of Uzbekistan and other countries of the region to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia has become paramount. We greatly appreciate the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs in supporting the expert group, which is currently working on a draft treaty.

The establishment of the zone is nearly complete, and, to legitimize it, Uzbekistan calls on all permanent Security Council members to develop a consolidated position with the region's States on the provisions of the draft treaty and its protocol.

Thirdly, Central Asia is facing a wide-scale assault by international drug cartels, which are using the destructive power of international terrorism to protect drug routes. Under these conditions, there is a need for concerted efforts and effective international programmes under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

We believe that the establishment in Tashkent of the regional information and coordination centre to combat transboundary crime, proposed by President Islam Karimov during the visit of Secretary-General to Uzbekistan last October, could become a tangible contribution by the United Nations. We count on the support of the United Nations and donor countries in making this initiative a reality.

Today, the United Nations faces the need to adapt its mechanisms to the realities of the new world, which, we think, is dependent upon the prompt completion of the process of reform of the Organization. There is an urgent need to reorganize the Security Council so that it reflects current realities. An expanded Security Council should include both developed and developing nations. We reiterate our call for inclusion of Germany and Japan in the Security Council as permanent members.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the principally new approaches taken by the United Nations to the realities and prospects of Central Asia will ultimately meet the fundamental interests of the entire world community. I am confident that this session will give new momentum to the joint efforts of Member States to counter the threats and challenges of global and regional security.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor Namhong (Cambodia): First of all, I wish to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that, under your wise leadership, the work of this great Assembly will further strengthen international cooperation and will thus contribute to the maintenance of peace, stability and security in this globalized world. The international environment today remains, no doubt, uncertain, as the world continues to confront constant change and turbulence.

On the global stage, at least three key challenges continue to occupy the attention and remain a priority of the international community.

The first challenge is the global situation. First, the current situation in Iraq is a serious predicament. While the war is over, the situation in the country remains critical. Peace, security and stability have not returned to Iraq. Although the number of international contingents deployed in Iraq has been increased, the overall environment in the country is very fragile and highly unstable. I think that United Nations should assume a greater and more responsible role in returning normalcy to the country during the transitional period. The road to normalcy means that Iraq should be allowed to govern itself as early as possible, which can be done in several ways, including the holding of free and fair elections.

Cambodia strongly condemns the criminal attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August, and it wishes to pay a tribute to all the victims, especially to Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Let us pay our respect to the memory of that great servant of peace. We in Cambodia always remembers his noble actions in Cambodia in the early 1990s in the framework of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

Secondly, regarding the Middle East quagmire, it is important that all parties to the conflict, particularly

Palestine and Israel, as well as the international community, continue to pursue a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict on the basis of the agreed road map of the Quartet. At the same time, I believe that it is vital for the leaders of both sides of this conflict to renounce the cycle of violence and overcome feelings of animosity and myopic interest. Instead, they should consider the broader collective interests of peaceful coexistence, a peaceful life for their peoples and stability in the region. There is a need for all sides to have a sense of political realism and shared determination to make peace possible.

I believe that today peace in the Middle East will come only when both Palestine and Israel reasonably recognize in every way that they must coexist side by side, living in peace and harmony with each other and looking after the interests of one another. Peace, tolerance and harmony are the only way forward for the people of Palestine and Israel. In that regard, the international community must remain fully committed to continuing to support the Middle East process to its end.

Thirdly, terrorism is still a very serious threat to humanity as a whole. Since the attacks of 11 September and the international reaction to fight terrorism, terrorists have been strengthening their worldwide networks. They also continue to kill innocent people everywhere in the world. In Asia and in South-East Asia, Jemaah Islamiah, which is linked to al Qaeda, has been responsible for a number of terrorist attacks in the region. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been actively responding to terrorism by strengthening cooperation at all levels, issuing various statements and taking concrete measures. Nevertheless, Jemaah Islamiah remains a significant threat to the region today, despite the progress in anti-terrorism action thus far.

Fourthly, regarding global poverty, we recall the Millennium Summit held in New York and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey and the recent G-8 Summit in Evian, France, where the overriding theme was the fight against poverty, which calls for concerted efforts for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. However, poverty remains a severe problem for the world, particularly the developing countries, with 1.2 billion people still surviving on less than one dollar a day. Despite clear messages from all those summits, especially from the developing countries, on the need to reduce poverty, the actions so far have not been decisive enough.

I believe that, without concrete measures and the provision of adequate resources, it will be impossible for the least developed countries to overcome the current challenges of poverty, aggravated by the speed of globalization, which has contributed to the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Fighting poverty is not the responsibility of the least developed countries alone. It is the shared responsibility of the international community, in which the developed world has an important role to play. Poverty prevails today in many forms and dimensions. For the developed countries to share resources with the developing countries is not only an act of generosity, it is also a requirement for living together in a world of peace, security and harmony. In that regard, I am convinced that the international community must act collectively and in a spirit of responsibility and solidarity to end this alarming situation of poverty by taking concrete steps to reduce it gradually.

The second major challenge involves regional developments. Regarding the regional situation, there have been many developments. Some have been positive; others negative. I wish to note several important developments since last year. First, the eighth ASEAN Summit and other related summits in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, have successfully advanced ASEAN integration by moving the region ahead in terms of establishing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), deepening cooperation between ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and strengthening cooperation with India. With those four countries, ASEAN has enhanced close and proactive cooperation among a combined population of more than three billion people that has enormous economic potential and opportunities for development and growth. In addition, during that ASEAN Summit, its leaders also held, for the first time, a summit dialogue with Africa through President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, the current Chairman of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD.

Secondly, the situation in the Korean peninsula continues to evolve and give rise to concerns for countries that are directly involved. Cambodia fully supports the peace talks in Beijing and believes that only dialogue and compromise can provide the way out

of the present quandary. Although a number of outstanding issues need to be mutually resolved, I think it is important for all the parties concerned to reduce tension by avoiding hostile actions that would escalate the situation. I believe that one way of enabling the situation on the Korean Peninsula to move ahead positively is to negotiate a road map for a nuclear-free and secure Korean Peninsula. I believe that, if such a plan could go ahead, steps towards the normalization of the situation on the Korean Peninsula could be taken.

Thirdly, I would like to refer to recent developments in Cambodia. The situation in Cambodia is continuing to improve significantly. The recent elections were held in a free, fair and democratic environment, as many international election observers noted in their statements. This year's election marks another important milestone in Cambodia's democratization, which has been strengthened at the grass-roots level through the successful local elections to communal councils last year. At the same time, Cambodia's gross domestic product growth continues to show positive signs, with an approximate growth rate of 6.7 per cent per annum over the past five years, despite natural calamities and the impact of other regional and global developments, such as terrorism and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

In addition, the Government's strategy gives top priority to poverty reduction. In March this year, the Cambodian Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen, officially launched the campaign for poverty alleviation aimed at reducing the poverty rate by 1.2 per cent every year. By 2015, the poverty level would be reduced to 19 per cent. In order to achieve that end, a budget of $1.5 billion has been projected.

The third challenge is the reform of the United Nations. Every year, representatives of every delegation advocate to the Assembly the necessity of reforming the Organization, in particular the Security Council. I, too, believe that without sufficient reform in this world body, the United Nations cannot be an effective and efficient global Organization that is able to respond collectively to the complex global challenges affecting humanity in the twenty-first century. The world has witnessed a wave of democracy since the end of the cold war more than a decade ago. I believe, however, that democratization needs to start right here at the United Nations, which should respect the will of the community of nations. Any further inaction on the part of the United Nations with regard to the call for reform will mean a continuing decline in its credibility, as well as increasing loss of confidence in this universal institution.

I believe that one of the key issues of United Nations reform is the need for the expansion of the Security Council. Cambodia calls once again for the expansion of the membership of the Security Council to include Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and India as new permanent members, given the crucial role of these three countries in international political and economic affairs today.

Moreover, the General Assembly, as the highest body of the United Nations, should play a more important role, in accordance with the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. Furthermore, in the context of United Nations reform, I think that we should look beyond the conventional agenda of international peace and security, given that the glaring poverty in the world today is, without doubt, a peace and security issue. I believe that the United Nations should play a more meaningful role, within the broad framework of human security, in the world's collective efforts to fight poverty.

As the world marches on, I believe that we must perhaps devise new ways to deal with a myriad of challenges that menace the whole of humanity. We will have to close the gap between the poor and the rich and between the developed and developing countries. We must fight poverty and HIV/AIDS, which are affecting millions of people in the developing countries. We need to tackle together the growing impact of transnational crime. At the same time, we must pay greater attention to hotbeds of tension around the world in order to ensure a peaceful and secure world for all.

Finally, we must continue to ensure that the United Nations is truly a democratic global institution that reflects the reality of the world today. We need to advance together in peace, security, stability, development and prosperity in building a better place for all peoples on the Earth.

In conclusion, I believe the way forward for the world will depend largely on international cooperation and the need to share global resources more equitably. Growing interdependence and increasing globalization mean that every nation must work collectively in addressing the current challenges in the most effective way.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Francisco Guerrero Prats, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Guerrero Prats (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The international community is currently going through a period of reflection and self-definition. The great transformations that humanity experienced during the course of the previous decade, as well as current challenges, demand greater responsibility on the part of our nations in playing an active role in the search for urgent solutions to the problems that are affecting us. This new session of the General Assembly presents us with an excellent opportunity to achieve that goal.

Today, the Dominican Republic reaffirms its commitment to peace, the defence of human rights, security, sustainable development and the strengthening of democracy — pillars of indisputable importance in safeguarding international peace and stability.

The issue of the reform of the United Nations has been on our agenda for a long time. Events of recent years make it clear that this task must be undertaken as a matter of priority. The reform the Security Council is particularly urgent. Ever since the approval of resolution 47/62 of 11 December 1992, we have been engaged in an ongoing debate on the various reform proposals. Now, however, it is time to act to restructure the Council so as to make it more representative and equitable, as well as more transparent in its decision-making, thereby strengthening its legitimacy as the guarantor of international peace and security.

Terrorism has emerged as an ongoing threat to humanity. Uncertainty and pain have characterized the beginning of the twenty-first century. Our nations have the challenge of fighting together, at a global level, against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in favour of equitable development and free societies. Security problems call for decisive action against international terrorism, organized crime and the illegal trade in arms and drugs.

The Millennium Summit established as one of its main goals the reduction of poverty by 50 per cent by 2015. Notwithstanding some progress in the achievement of those goals, poverty remains a terrible scourge. The Dominican Government, which considers that issue to be one of great importance, has created a Social Cabinet to act as a coordinating mechanism for all governmental institutions for social welfare, and is helping to ensure that both national and international resources are distributed equitably and allocated to regions that require social investment.

All countries must join efforts, accepting responsibilities, both shared and separate, to guarantee that growth and poverty do not go together and that, in meeting the needs of the present generation, we do not cause the destruction of future generations' capacity to meet their own needs.

The positive outcome of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001, and of the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, was a key element for achieving millennium development goals. The Doha Development Agenda and the Monterrey Consensus provided a framework to facilitate market access, improve multilateral regulations for channelling globalization and increase financial aid for development.

However, we must mention what happened at the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) recently held in Cancún, Mexico. Although agreement was not reached because of fundamental differences in the positions regarding essential world trade issues, we are convinced that this will not affect the multilateral system of negotiations. On the contrary, some member states maintain that this impasse may even be necessary to shape more equitable international agreements at the heart of the WTO. What is an important issue is not to lose the development perspective within the work programme of the WTO, as set in the Doha Development Agenda, because that agenda includes the aspirations of millions of people around the world, whose hope for progress lies in the opportunities of the global economy.

The position of the Dominican Government with regard to the Middle East conflict is based primarily on unconditional adherence to the norms and principles of international law, particularly those related to the peaceful solution of disputes; condemning the use of force and terrorism in all its forms; complying in good faith with international treaties; and on strict observance of resolutions of the United Nations and its deliberative bodies.

Devoted to these principles, the Dominican Republic has, in response to the humanitarian appeals

of the Security Council, participated in the efforts to rebuild Iraq, in order to contribute to the development of a secure and stable environment in which the sovereignty of the Iraqi people may be restored.

Similarly, our country supports the peace process outlined in the road map submitted by the United States of America and endorsed by the Russian Federation, the United Nations and the European Union. We understand that a cessation of violence cannot be postponed, along with the historic pledges of all parties to make sacrifices to promote a lasting solution to the conflict and peaceful coexistence.

Drawing up sustainable development policies calls for dealing with problems before they emerge. This implies making headway in achieving the millennium development goals, particularly on crucial issues such as energy and protection of the environment. In this respect, our nation reiterates its rejection of the international maritime transport of radioactive and toxic waste, a position which has been expressed in other international forums. This issue is linked to international security.

The importance of guaranteeing women equal rights and equity, and promoting their increased political participation, has been a continuous concern of the heads of State in various international forums. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the only institution within the United Nations system dedicated exclusively to that end, has its headquarters in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Government calls upon Member States to continue supporting the work of INSTRAW in the Dominican Republic by providing contributions, to the extent that they can.

Our country commends the culture of peace, and is making efforts to ensure that at the primary level children are taught about promoting mutual understanding and learn about civics and human rights.

Similarly, we believe that a solid and permanent democracy is an achievable goal. The challenges here are clear: growing democracy, more respect for civic rights, freedom of the press; freedom of expression of political parties and public opinion; dignity and transparency of all leaders and the moral legitimacy of all.

Deeply concerned about the spread of HIV/AIDS in our nation, the Government has made great efforts to comply with the commitments entered into in the Declaration on fighting this terrible disease. We call for increased international cooperation and efforts to guarantee the availability of drugs at affordable prices, based on the Doha Declaration on intellectual property and the right to health.

The Dominican Republic salutes with optimism the role played by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) in efforts to develop humanitarian aid programmes for the Haitian people. It is imperative to stress here the need for greater support from the international community for our neighbouring republic of Haiti and its neglected population.

Although we are aware that this issue has been excluded from the agenda of the current session , we wish to state our support for the aspirations of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to rejoin this Organization, of which it was a Member for many years. Our position is in line with the universal principles contained in the Charter, the basis of the rules of international law and the historical tradition of friendly relations with Taiwan.

On behalf of the Dominican Government, Sir, may I congratulate you on your election as President, confident that your conduct of this session will be successful, beneficial for the international community and a source of pride to your country, Saint Lucia, and thus to our Caribbean community.

I also wish to express the Dominican Government's rejection of the barbaric act perpetrated against the United Nations Mission in Baghdad on 19 August, and to reiterate to the families of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and of the other deceased colleagues our most heartfelt condolences.

We are all aware of the great challenges confronting humanity. Our future depends on the actions we take now. We have the opportunity to meet the expectations of the nations of the world. Let us take up this challenge with all due responsibility.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mateus Meira Rita, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Meira Rita (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese, English text provided by the delegation*): I begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election. My Government is deeply gratified by the recognition of your accomplishments as someone from a country that is a member of the Small Island Developing States Network. We are confident you will lead the work of fifty-eighth session with the same abilities as your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic.

On behalf of the people of Sao Tome and Principe, I would like to reaffirm the principles of the Charter and its role in promoting peace and development, and to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his dedication and leadership.

We all face daunting challenges. Violence has inflamed international relations. On behalf of my country, I would like to express our outrage and regret that the United Nations Mission in Baghdad was brutally attacked, with the tragic loss of such outstanding United Nations professionals as Sergio Vieira de Mello. We pay tribute to all those who died defending the peaceful path to peace and development in Iraq.

As we all are aware, Africa, perhaps more than all the world's continents, faces enormous challenges. We are plagued by endemic diseases such as malaria, which debilitate and kill our people needlessly. HIV/AIDS is devastating Africa's families, societies, cultures and economies. How can we have economic development when our people are too ill to work, or when the main breadwinner in the family is dying of HIV/AIDS, without any medical treatment?

Our economy has begun to feel the negative effects of these two deadly diseases. We urge all nations to work together to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources for the critical task of controlling these epidemics, which give rise to an unrelenting cycle of death and suffering for our peoples. There can be no hope for progress in Africa if basic health is not first ensured, so that the people can work and build their own prosperity.

Sao Tome and Principe, a small island State with a fragile economy, is struggling. We are proud of our democracy, our free and fair elections, our human rights and our rule of law. But in July of this year our proud and stable democracy came under threat from forces seeking to topple our constitutionally elected Government. They did not succeed, because the international community quickly intervened to support our elected authorities and to negotiate a peaceful end to the coup attempt, which restored our constitutional Government. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his personal concern for our country's well-being. I wish also to express my appreciation for the support of the African Union, led by President Chissano of Mozambique, and for the tireless assistance of President Obasanjo of Nigeria, as well as that of officials from Portugal, Brazil, the United States, Angola, Gabon, Cape Verde and the Congo, and the many others who rescued our democracy from peril.

But our democracy will remain under threat unless the Government can mobilize resources sufficient to provide basic services to our long-suffering people. For this reason, the people and the Government of Sao Tome and Principe ask for continued international support, with development aid, to improve the lot of our people and to ensure the survival of our young democracy.

We must all work together to strengthen multilateral cooperation and to ensure that the United Nations and all its agencies continue to be the forum in which all Member States can promote dialogue and ensure world peace, security, democracy and development.

My country regrets that international relations in some parts of the world have deteriorated to the point where extreme violence is the daily norm, infrastructures have been destroyed, and human rights are daily violated. We lament the plight of the refugees that this violence creates, and especially the plight of children, who often become the victims of those who traffic in human beings.

The tragedies in Iraq, the Middle East, Liberia and Afghanistan — to name only the most egregious — can be overcome only within the multilateral framework of United Nations. Unilateral actions are doomed to failure in the long run.

At the same time, Sao Tome and Principe supports an urgent reform of the Security Council, to make it into a body that reflects current realities and not those of the cold-war era. The Security Council must be democratised, with the expansion of the category of permanent members.

We observe with great concern the spread of terrorist acts across the globe, ranging from tragic examples such as what happened at Bali in Asia, to Palestine and Israel in the Middle East, to Spain and the United Kingdom in Europe, to Kenya and Tanzania in Africa, to Colombia in Latin America, and right here to New York and other sites in North America. But fighting violence with violence is not enough. We must go to the root of the problem, and that is the task of the United Nations.

The world is a less secure place today than it was a year ago. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues, non-proliferation treaties notwithstanding. We must ensure the universality of those treaties and compliance with them under the authority of the Security Council.

Sao Tome and Principe strongly supports the Millennium Development Goals, but much remains to be accomplished. The rules of the international economy continue to be dictated by a small number of countries that promote free markets while closing their own. The latest World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún is the natural result of this hypocrisy. Developing economies like that of my country can be competitive only if there is a level playing field, if all markets are open and if subsidies and protectionism are erased.

As an island nation, Sao Tome and Principe continues to see its very existence threatened by global warming. Our shorelines are eroding and our national territory is shrinking as the seas rise. Is my small country to end up as nothing but a tiny volcanic peak sticking up above the waves, with the last of our people clinging to the land left unclaimed by the rising sea? The Kyoto Protocol must be implemented by all for the benefit of all.

For many years, the people of Cuba have been living under an unjustifiable economic embargo. That economic embargo is hampering development, and people's lives would improve were it to end. The time has come for both sides to improve confidence-building measures by going back to the negotiating table and normalizing relations.

Mr. President, my country would once again ask for your attention with respect to the Republic of China on Taiwan. This is a country with a democratically elected Government which has built a strong economy and which has strong ties with many Member States. Taiwan was recently affected by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), but it was beyond the reach of the World Health Organization because Taiwan is not allowed to be a member — simply because Taiwan's people do not accept the imposition of the "one China" principle.

Despite its small size, Taiwan offers development aid to a large number of countries. Taiwan also contributes to international security by being a strong proponent of the fight against terrorism.

I wish to call to the attention of the Assembly that, under the universality rules set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the Republic of China on Taiwan must one day be here among us.

Our goal is to leave a better world for the next generation. We cannot go along with the concept of using force in international relations, and we denounce human injustice.

We decry environmental degradation, which ultimately threatens us all. Sao Tome and Principe urges dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding on the part of all Member States. We ask all to respect the United Nations Charter.

The President: I call on His Excellency The Honourable Henry Chimunthu Banda, M.P., Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Chimunthu Banda (Malawi): First of all, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and also to commend Mr. Jan Kavan for his outstanding and astute leadership in presiding over the fifty-seventh session. I should like also to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his dynamism and for the great leadership qualities he continues to display in steering the affairs of the United Nations. I wish to assure you of Malawi's continued support and cooperation as we deal with the challenges before us.

I would like to express Malawi's sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the senseless and barbaric attack against the headquarters of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, which resulted in the loss of a number of lives, including that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. The attack should serve as a warning of our need to remain focused on the fight against terrorism to ensure that the

war against that scourge proceeds as a multilateral undertaking. We fully support the call for all those responsible for such attacks to be charged with war crimes.

Time has demonstrated the cardinal place of multilateral approaches to international issues and problems. The Iraq situation has revealed to us all in the international community the importance of multilateralism under the auspices of the United Nations, whose central role in addressing international conflicts should not be undermined.

Let me seize this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Malawi, my gratitude to the United Nations and its agencies, as well as to other multilateral and bilateral donors, for the emergency relief assistance given to Malawi and to other countries of southern Africa during the past two years, when our people faced a critical food shortage that threatened millions of lives. Their timely intervention enabled us to prevent a massive loss of life. We trust that the international community will also assist us in improving our agricultural production so as to prevent the recurrence of famine.

Africa continues to experience the effects of the tragedy created by the HIV/AIDS scourge. Our national budgets are seriously overstretched by the demands of care, treatment, support and funerals for HIV/AIDS victims, which occur on an hourly basis in an environment of devastating economic decline and famine. We are losing able-bodied people and professional expertise in all the sectors of our society two and a half times faster than we can replace them. We are grappling with the problem of caring for tens of thousands of orphans, whose numbers are increasing at an alarming rate.

The bleak and desperate situation created by HIV/AIDS urgently calls for concerted and practical international action to implement the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals in the fight against this pandemic. I would like to thank all those partners that continue to assist us in addressing this serious problem.

Malawi has paid close attention to the new international debate presently taking shape which advocates a qualitative paradigm shift from policy frameworks and mere commitments in conferences to the concrete implementation of an agreed action programme, or what has become known as the New Multilateralism which aims at addressing the serious shortcomings of existing multilateral policy prescriptions. The debate also seeks to effect a move in the right direction. My Government supports this important innovation and, especially, the newly-launched United Nations system wide integrated framework for least developed countries, jointly worked out by the six core agencies and designed to facilitate the effective integration of the least developed economies into the multilateral trading system.

We also support the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) mechanism for effecting increased coordination and collaboration at the national level in the preparation of development plans and programmes. We are keen to see a better-coordinated and integrated follow-up to, and implementation of, not only conference outcomes but also outstanding donor commitments to our development efforts.

In the same vein, the Government of Malawi fully endorses the current exercise designed to reform the United Nations. A more representative and democratic United Nations will enhance the efficiency and credibility of this world organization.

I cannot overemphasize the centrality of market access and trade to the whole question of poverty eradication, sustainable agriculture and rural development. We need to translate the debate on Western protectionism into a deliberate, broad-ranging global policy against trade barriers. Malawi is concerned at the collapse of the recent World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún, Mexico. We can only hope that the stalemate in the talks is only temporary. In the current unbalanced system of trade, low commodity prices on the international market have allowed a virtual free flow of our primary products to the West with a near-zero return on our agricultural sector, making it all the more difficult to develop the sector into a key catalyst for rural and sustainable development as a strategy for effective poverty reduction.

The world today is faced with multiple challenges, which have tested the resilience of the strong, as well as that of the weak. In Africa, the noble objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), geared towards enabling Africans themselves to assume full responsibility for

development challenges, can be meaningfully realised only with the support of the developed countries. So far, not much has been achieved owing to resource constraints. The resource pledges made by the Group of Eight at meetings in Canada and France must be honoured in order for the implementation of the NEPAD programmes to pull Africa out of economic stagnation.

We were heartened by the launch, early this year, of the road map for a Middle East peace with the expectation that it had established conditions for an irreversible transition to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State co-existing with the State of Israel. It is, therefore, regrettable that the road map is being frustrated by elements that do not wish to see peace take root in the Middle East. We call upon the Middle East Quartet and the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, in particular, to remain committed to the road map and to do everything in their power to make it succeed.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General, jointly with the Assembly and the Security Council, for having taken a number of decisive steps towards the resolution of conflicts in Africa, including through the framework of the open-ended ad hoc Committee. of the Security Council on conflict prevention and recovery in Africa. Malawi reaffirms its alignment with the position of Africa and the Southern African Development Community on preventive diplomacy, and commends, in this regard, the General Assembly work on a draft resolution on the prevention of armed conflict in Africa. We also support the Economic and Social Council resolution establishing an Ad Hoc Advisory Group for mobilizing assistance for African countries emerging from conflict.

The humanitarian tragedies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia remain a serious distraction from important national and regional development initiatives.

In this regard, we welcome the peaceful handover of the reigns of power in Burundi on 30 April, 2003, in accordance with the terms of the peace accord of August 2000. We also commend the successful establishment and launching of a broad-based Government of national unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 15 July 2003 and the peaceful and successful elections recently held in Rwanda. However, it is important that war crimes committed in conflict areas be thoroughly investigated so that justice may take its course. This would help to check impunity, a phenomenon of most conflict situations. In this connection, my Government welcomes the announcement, on 16 July 2003, by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of plans to investigate war crimes committed in the region of Ituri in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Malawi believes that the United Nations can meaningfully advance the principles upon which it was founded and effectively deal with the multiple challenges that the global community is facing by taking an all-inclusive approach to its membership. It is in this spirit that my country has, time and again, called for the participation of the Republic of China in the affairs of this Organization in line with the principle of universality. Taiwan has a lot to offer in the promotion of the global common good, which the United Nations is here to advance. I therefore hope that the 23 million people of Taiwan will be given sympathetic consideration so that they may, once again, enjoy the right to associate with the world community through this Organization.

Next year will be an important one for the people of Malawi, as we will be holding the third general election of the democratic dispensation ushered in 1994. The elections will be tripartite, as they will include presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. The elections could not have been scheduled to take place at a worse time, given that the country has recently experienced a serious food shortage that has further strained the few resources available to it. However, in response to the demands of the country's constitution, the Government and the people of Malawi remain committed to fulfilling this constitutional requirement for good governance based on free and fair elections. Malawi seeks the cooperation, support and assistance of the international community to facilitate the entire electoral process.

May I conclude by conveying to you, Mr. President, to the Secretary-General and, indeed, to the United Nations family, the profound gratitude and appreciation of His Excellency President Bakili Muluzi and the people of Malawi for the support and cooperation extended to the President and his Government since they assumed power in 1994. As President Muluzi prepares to retire next year, after

serving the people of Malawi as President for two consecutive five-year terms, he is confident that the United Nations and, indeed, the international community at large, will remain committed to assisting the new leadership and the people of Malawi in their quest for meaningful and effective socio-economic and political development.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alfred Capelle, chairman of the delegation of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, on behalf of His Excellency President Kessai H. Note and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to your high office. At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the bereaved families that lost loved ones in the recent bombing attack on the United Nations offices in Baghdad. That tragic event was also a great loss to the international community. Such horrific acts of terrorism are utterly condemnable, and those responsible should be swiftly brought to justice.

My delegation is especially pleased that this session of the General Assembly will be presided over by the representative of a fellow member of the Alliance of Small Island States, and we wish you well, Sir, in your endeavours throughout the session. We are hopeful that your presidency will help to highlight the special needs of small island developing States. It has long been recognized that such States suffer particular disadvantages in terms of both environment and development. This was recently reaffirmed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which called for a full and comprehensive review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The coming year will be a particularly important one for the Marshall Islands and for all small island developing States as we prepare for the 2004 International Meeting in Mauritius to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. In preparation for that Meeting, the Marshall Islands is currently completing an assessment of the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national level. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the international donor and development community to engage with the small island developing States in the preparatory process and to actively participate in the International Meeting so that it can produce successful and practical outcomes for all such States.

The Marshall Islands is faced with challenges shared by many small island States. Our land comprises small, scattered islands and atolls, spread over vast areas of ocean. Our unique environment is fragile and highly vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and environmental pollution and degradation. Our natural resource base is extremely narrow, our economy very small and we are disadvantaged by our remoteness from world markets.

Given these factors, in our interactions within the international community, the Marshall Islands is particularly concerned about the following issues. The first issue is sustainable development. Pursuing the three pillars of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — poses many challenges for small island States. During last year's general debate, we introduced our national blueprint for sustainable development. This document forms the basis of our long-term sustainable development plans, which we are currently working hard to implement.

In this context, and in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, we continue to seek opportunities to form partnerships that will assist us in the practical implementation of projects under the Pacific's 14 Type II Umbrella Initiatives. Areas of particular importance for our people include the need for greater access to fresh water, the availability of affordable, renewable and environmentally sound energy sources and the development of waste management systems that minimize hazardous impacts on society and the environment.

Also in this regard, we welcome the new work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We are particularly pleased that small island developing countries will be considered as a cross-cutting issue in relation to the themes of each two-year work cycle, and that the theme of the 2014-2015 work cycle will focus on small island developing States issues.

Our second main area of concern is the environment, and in particular the threats posed by global climate change and sea level rise. These threats

are felt most acutely by low-lying island and atoll countries such as the Marshall Islands and many of our Pacific neighbours.

I am pleased to announce that the Marshall Islands has recently completed its ratification process for the Kyoto Protocol. I take this opportunity to commend those States that have ratified the Protocol, and I urge remaining States to do so without delay. This matter is surely the most urgent facing the international community today. If we fail to act now, the future will see the complete disappearance of many small island nations.

In relation to environmental matters, the Marshall Islands is particularly concerned about the state of the world's oceans and fisheries. As a nation whose very livelihood depends on the resources of the sea, the Marshall Islands Government reaffirms its unwavering support for the regime established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. I am also pleased to state that the Marshall Islands is now a party to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement.

The Marshall Islands is seriously concerned about instances of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing within its exclusive economic zone. Such fishing gravely undermines the livelihood of our people that depend on these resources as their primary means of survival. Regional and international cooperation must focus on addressing this issue.

Within our region, we are pleased to note the recent progress of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. We are also particularly pleased with the development of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and we look forward to broad participation in the upcoming Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum.

An ongoing issue of major concern for the Marshall Islands is that of nuclear weapons testing. The people and the environment of the Marshall Islands continue to suffer as a consequence of the nuclear weapons tests that were conducted in our territory between 1946 and 1958.

As we continue to seek resolution of this issue our people continue to suffer from ongoing health effects, the food chain still contains dangerously high radiation levels and our development capacity is restrained by an inability to use contaminated islands and atolls.

I have briefly addressed a few issues of major concern to the Marshall Islands. There are, of course, many other significant issues to be addressed during the upcoming session.

One of the most important challenges facing the international community is the need for a comprehensive, unified response to combat acts of international terrorism. I am pleased to be able to say that the Marshall Islands has ratified all 12 of the core Conventions against terrorism. We are continually working to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), and we have taken many steps at the national level to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. We reiterate our solidarity with all Member States that are working to eliminate terrorism in all its forms.

Another important issue facing this body is the continued exclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan from the United Nations. The Marshall Islands Government reiterates its concern that the exclusion of a nation of peaceful and law-abiding citizens is not consistent with the inclusive ideal of the United Nations. I therefore strongly urge every Member State to reconsider this matter.

The Marshall Islands welcomes the progress achieved by the International Criminal Court over the past year. Many positive developments have taken place, not the least of these being the election of a prominent panel of judges and the chief prosecutor. We look forward to the Court becoming fully operational and we are confident that the Court will prove to be a valuable mechanism in the administration of justice at the international level.

Finally, in terms of the need for further United Nations reform, the Marshall Islands Government wishes to reiterate its support for the expansion of the Security Council. We believe that the number of both permanent and non-permanent members should be increased, and that such expansion should include members from both developed and developing countries. This expansion is urgently needed to increase the representative base of the Council and to enhance its legitimacy in the light of the geographic and political realities of the world today. We also wish to emphasize the need for further streamlining of the work of the General Assembly and its six Main

Committees in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

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General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

19th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 1 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable James Wapakhabulo, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Wapakhabulo (Uganda): On behalf of the Uganda delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, under your able leadership, we shall achieve the objectives of our deliberations. Let me also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the excellent leadership he has provided to the United Nations during a very trying and difficult year.

My country attaches great importance to the centrality of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and in fostering international development cooperation. In that regard, Uganda hopes that this session of the General Assembly will focus on the critical reform of the United Nations to meet the new challenges to multilateralism.

Terrorism has reached epic proportions as a threat to international peace and security. Particularly since 11 September, terrorist organizations have indiscriminately attacked, killed and maimed thousands of innocent civilians in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the Americas. In northern Uganda, a terrorist organization called the Lords Resistance Army has killed hundreds, displaced thousands and abducted children into forced recruitment and sale in slavery.

On 19 August, the terrorists chose to strike at the heart of the United Nations. They attacked the United Nations offices in Baghdad. That callous attack led to the death of innocent Iraqis and many members of the United Nations staff, including the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello. On behalf of the Government and people of Uganda, I wish to express sincere condolences to the Secretary-General and to the bereaved families. We must condemn those acts of terrorism in the strongest terms, and the international community must unite to fight this scourge. Under no circumstances should indiscriminate use of violence be justified.

We must acknowledge that the emergence of new threats such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, combined with genocide and the massive violation of human rights, poses a clear and present challenge to the United Nations.

My country, therefore, shares the view of the Secretary-General that the time has come to examine the fundamental policy issues and structural mechanisms that may be needed to deal with these new challenges. We support his proposal to establish a group of eminent persons to make recommendations regarding the necessary reforms of the Security

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Council and other United Nations institutions and processes.

On the situation in the Middle East, Uganda welcomes the Quartet-led road map for a comprehensive settlement. We support the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side and in peace with Israel, within secure and recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

I now turn to the Great Lakes region of Africa. We are pleased to note that there have been positive developments as a result of regional and international efforts to build peace and stability in the region. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Transitional Government of National Unity has been established in accordance with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the related Pretoria and Luanda Agreements, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Uganda remains committed to supporting the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including ending the Lendu-Hema inter-ethnic conflict in the Ituri Province. Uganda encouraged the Security Council to establish a robust force of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), under Chapter VII, for peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration of negative forces.

In that regard, Uganda welcomes Security Council resolution 1493 (2003). My country provided Entebbe airbase for logistical support to the European Union-led stabilization force in Bunia in July, 2003. We have also concluded an agreement with MONUC to utilize Entebbe airbase, as well as the Kasese and Arua Airports, for United Nations operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to the situation in Burundi, the implementation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement remains on track, under the regional initiative presided over by President Museveni of Uganda and facilitated by Deputy President Zuma of South Africa. The African Union mission in Burundi has been established. We call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to provide the necessary support for the mission.

On the situation in the Sudan, the Government of Uganda commends the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army for the historic agreement on security arrangements, signed in Naivasha, Kenya, last week. We urge the parties to expedite the negotiation of the remaining issues so that a comprehensive agreement can be reached. The restoration of peace, security and political stability in the Sudan is not only good for the long-suffering people of that country, but also for Africa as a whole.

Uganda particularly welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to convene a high-level meeting, which adopted the Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda on 25 September. Our countries pledged to refrain from interfering directly or indirectly in one another's internal affairs, including making sure that none of the neighbouring countries' territory is used to arm, supply or host any hostile elements or armed groups against the other.

These efforts, aimed at the restoration of peace, security, political stability and good-neighbourliness, are not only good for the Great Lakes region, but also for Africa and indeed the entire international community. Uganda strongly believes that these are necessary pre-conditions for regional integration and the promotion of trade and investment to meet the needs of our people. To that end, Uganda welcomes and supports the forthcoming United Nations conference on the Great Lakes region.

Despite many commitments already made at various international forums, the international community has yet to demonstrate sufficient political will to mobilize adequate resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to ensure equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization for all. The failure of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, held at Cancún, vividly demonstrates this.

Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, important plans of action, declarations and strategies have been agreed upon, inter alia, in Brussels, Doha, Monterrey, Johannesburg and Almaty, for the achievement of sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. The challenge for the international community now is to ensure their full and effective follow-up and implementation. The international

community must accord special priority to the development needs of the landlocked and least developed countries, in order to facilitate their full integration into the global system. Although official development assistance will continue to play an important role in development, Uganda regards trade as the single most important external source of development financing and productivity growth. In this respect, the Doha Development Agenda should ensure that the least developed countries not only have access to markets, but also attain capacity to produce competitively for those markets. We call upon the developed countries to show the necessary flexibility, especially on the question of agricultural subsidies, to allow for the full and timely completion of the comprehensive agenda agreed upon at Doha.

The fifty-seventh United Nations General Assembly endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a home-grown African framework for international development cooperation within the continent. We reiterate the call made last week from this podium by the current Chairman of the African Union, President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique, for strong and effective support for NEPAD by the international community.

In summary, my country has supported the call for collective action against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. We have noted the positive developments in the Great Lakes region and expressed our commitment to building a peaceful and stable region. We have also underscored the need for urgent and effective implementation of agreed upon plans of action to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to assure practical support for NEPAD. Finally, Uganda has reaffirmed its full commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Rialuth Serge Vohor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Telecommunications of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Vohor (Vanuatu) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to convey to this Assembly the heartfelt greetings of the Government and people of the Republic of Vanuatu. I should like first of all to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Presidency of the fifty-eight session of the General Assembly. You have assumed the Presidency at an extremely difficult, unsettled and complex time. A series of regrettable events have imperilled the political and ideological authority which is the universal foundation of the United Nations ability to work for the maintenance of peace and security in the world. Given the enormity of the challenges that now face us, my delegation — and I personally — would like to solemnly assure you of our support and full cooperation.

The job of the Secretary-General is one of the most difficult jobs, in particular when the very founding principles of the Organization are being compromised or simply discarded in favour of the interest of some Members. The Government of Vanuatu admires the outstanding authority and clear-sightedness as well as the diplomatic qualities of Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. His wisdom and his persistence have enabled Member States to step up their efforts to make the work of the United Nations more effective and better adapted to the maintenance of peace throughout the world, while keeping the focus on development priorities such as, in particular, the small economies of island States such as Vanuatu.

Quite frankly, we are participating in this meeting somewhat confused about the future of our Organization, since a minority of Powers are influencing the system to advance their own interests and to the detriment of the principles and mandates which are the prerogatives of the United Nations. The United Nations mission, inter alia, is to work for peaceful coexistence among peoples and nations. But the United Nations is being thwarted because of the unilateral initiatives of certain Powers. This is the responsibility of its Members, and this situation has to be addressed in order to restore the central role of the United Nations in conflict settlement.

We cannot conceive of any unilateral action in the future without the risk of paralysing the Organization itself. The decline of order and justice and the various conflicts that are occurring throughout the world are particularly disquieting. If the international system continues to be influenced by certain Powers, the future will remain uncertain, notwithstanding the individual efforts made by Member States and despite the countless resolutions adopted by this Assembly.

In recent years, the international geopolitical environment has been dramatically shaken. Irresponsible actions have unleashed much hatred and

bitterness, which jeopardizes world peace and harmony. The fundamental principles that justified the existence of the United Nations are now being called into question and we are duty-bound explicitly and clearly to redefine the new objectives and to strengthen the founding principles of the United Nations.

Many tragic events have occurred and countless innocent lives have been destroyed. These are the facts of the world today. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the members of the Secretariat who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty and to convey condolences to the United Nations Secretariat as well as to the families of the victims of that brutal and horrendous act. That barbaric and inhuman act of violence saddens us all. I join with previous speakers in condemning that brutal act.

Unfortunately, some of us have contributed to the current situation. A brief overview of past events definitely shows that various world conflicts, wars, famines, droughts, epidemics, poverty and environmental degradation are on the increase. Many developing countries are facing a variety of development difficulties, such as the increase in unemployment that contributes to the degradation of societies. In many cases, the destruction of social and cultural progress, caused by globalization and modernization, has increased feelings of hatred and bitterness. The main outlines for future development have been mapped out but the success of the implementation of this remains dependant on political will, particularly the financial commitments of the industrialized countries. However, I am still optimistic and I trust in your wisdom, Mr. President, to guide us to a better future.

While counter-terrorism and normalization in some countries are on the agenda, we should not divert our attention from the development issues that can undermine the future of developing countries. Considerable resources will be devoted to security questions, when only a tiny share of this amount would be enough to meet the needs of the developing countries.

The environment is another area of concern. We support previous statements by representatives of the island States of the Pacific, and we continue to encourage countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

How can we explain to our peoples that certain international obligations are priorities only for the small States, whereas the super-Powers seem hardly to be concerned about them, or are even hostile to them, and yet do not hesitate to impose a series of conditions which contribute to the underdevelopment of small States and which we could describe as political and economic interference?

The unilateral imposition and maintenance of the ban on the sale of products containing kava in Europe is an example of this discriminatory attitude. The European countries involved do not seem to take account of the scientific studies establishing the absence of any link between kava and kidney disease, a link suggested by the health authorities of some European countries.

The threat of economic sanctions by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) against tax havens in the Pacific, while excepting European jurisdictions, leaves no alternative than to accept the conditions imposed without any consideration of the economies concerned. Since our acceptance in principle of the OECD conditions we have received no indication from that organization of any quid pro quo that it can provide in the case of economic loss.

Despite the opposition of the Pacific region to the transportation of nuclear waste in the waters of our region, certain Powers show a complete lack of respect for the sovereignty of the small islands States of the Pacific. It is not only a question of the environment and of protecting our natural resources against any disaster; it is much more a question of ethics. In other words, we regret the complete lack of respect for the small island States of the Pacific as fully fledged members of the international community.

It is generally recognized today that trade is the engine of development. However, like other countries of similar size, Vanuatu is facing certain tariff and non-tariff restrictions which are causing our agricultural products to be inaccessible to, in particular, markets that are often described as free.

Bringing national laws into line with international conventions carries costs that are often disproportionate for the small countries. In almost all cases, national resource constraints, financial as well as technical, are ignored, whereas they must be taken into

account for the success of any programme of action resulting from international commitments.

We must not lose sight of the basic principle of the right to self-determination. We reiterate that the credibility of the United Nations rests on following up the implementation of any reform aimed at recognizing the right of peoples to self-determination, in the context of respect for others and for the United Nations Charter. We therefore applaud the efforts by the Government of Indonesia to open and maintain dialogue with the various social and minority constituents, as well as those in West Papua, in respect for human rights and freedom of expression.

We welcome the positive role and efforts of Australia and New Zealand, after an unprecedented decision by the countries of the region, to restore and maintain order, security and peace in the region, and in particular in the Solomon Islands.

We applaud the French President, Mr. Jacques Chirac, for having initiated a summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the South Pacific region, held last July, in order to strengthen our cooperation.

I trust in your wisdom, Mr. President, to make sure that all the theories expounded in the Assembly are followed by concrete, practical action. We have a duty to work collectively through the multilateral institutions to help resolve and overcome the difficulties and challenges that face us. In order to do that, we need to constantly review the very structure of the United Nations. The various unilateral initiatives have highlighted the limits of the current structure which have caused a weakening of the multilateral approach. Many super-Powers are unwilling to share even a part of their authority within the United Nations and seem to prefer the status quo. The principles of democratization and transparency advocated by most Members must be taken into account in the reorganization and in the Organization's decision-making process.

My delegation supports changing the permanent membership of the Security Council to include Japan and a representative of the African continent, of the Middle East and of the Alliance of Small Island States. This reform would give the Organization greater transparency, restore confidence in it and improve international cooperation. My delegation strongly supports the proposals made, and in particular the nomination of a group of leaders representing the various regions and the main categories of economies in order to launch this important proposal. This long awaited review will finally come about.

We need to take this great opportunity to renew and strengthen the United Nations in order to give it the qualities it needs to meet the challenges of our time. Strengthening the cohesion and unity of our great community of nations will be a daunting challenge, one which we are prepared to meet, while offering our complete and unconditional support.

We have aired our concerns in order to stress the injustices and contradictions in the current situation, but we assure the Organization of our support and our commitment to seeing the Organization revitalized, capable of meeting the aspirations of all its Members, whether large or small, rich or poor, strong or weak.

The contradictions of principle, mounting terrorism, human suffering, and the emergence of conflicts in regions that are normally peaceful, combined with the injustices of globalization, are all ingredients for a future catastrophe.

In conclusion, my delegation remains convinced that only a reinvigorated United Nations can contribute in a lasting manner to world peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Sir, on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. We assure you of our readiness to work with you and to contribute sincerely and successfully to the achievement of the noble goals we all seek to accomplish in the service of humanity, and to the safety and security of the international community. I also take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, who presided over the previous session, for his efforts to guarantee the success of the regular session and the special sessions held during the past year.

Let me also acknowledge the tireless and serious efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to promote the leading role of the United Nations in the field of international peace and security.

Once again, we stress the Sultanate of Oman's support for the Organization in its endeavours to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter.

At the outset, I should like to shed some light on the measures taken by my country to develop its important institutions, particularly the judiciary. It is our strong belief that a fair and just judiciary forms the basis for social and economic development. In our contemporary history, the Sultanate of Oman has enabled the judiciary to become the most important means of establishing justice, issuing fair rulings and removing injustices in society, without interference by the Executive branch or by any other branch of Government. That development was endorsed in the constitutional State system enacted by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said through decree 101/96, issued on 6 November 1996.

His Majesty also issued decree 90/99, which enacted the law granting full independence to the judiciary, on 21 November 1999. That law regulates the jurisdiction and the functions of courts of various circuits and at various levels. Moreover, the Supreme Court was established at the top of the judicial pyramid, with competence to standardize legal principles and to address faulty rulings. That was followed by a series of laws organizing various judicial organs, including a law establishing the higher judicial system. Additionally, a draft law on civil and trade procedures has been elaborated.

All of the aforementioned demonstrates His Majesty's interest in guaranteeing the well-being of the Omani citizen and in ensuring that all citizens are familiar with their rights and obligations, which are guaranteed through the right to due process.

In the spirit of continued development and broadened participation by the Omani people in our social and economic development programmes, my country — since the dawn of the blessed renaissance that began in 1970 at the initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and that has continued throughout the past 33 years — has adopted an approach utilizing the experience and expertise of Omani citizens in the Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, which includes positive aspects of our cultural heritage in the modern development of the Sultanate. Our Consultative Council process has witnessed a qualitative shift and an important transformation in our modern history. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said issued royal instructions in October 2002 expanding the base of popular participation in elections for the Omani Consultative Council by granting every citizen, male or female, over the age of 21, the right to vote and to participate in the next election — scheduled for 4 October — to select the 83 members of the Consultative Council for its fifth session, from 2004 to 2006. That step complements previous steps aimed at developing the Consultative Council. Those important developments in the Sultanate of Oman will create a strong foundation for more development and advancement programmes to benefit the Omani people.

We have followed recent developments in Palestine with grave concern. The Palestinian National Authority responded positively to the international community's demands by accepting the road map — considered the most important document in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict — which embodies the international commitment to establishing an independent, sovereign Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel. Nevertheless, the cycle of violence between the Palestinians and the Israeli Government continues unabated, which may doom the entire peace process, plunging it into a dark abyss from which it could be very difficult to rescue it. Therefore, the Quartet — sponsor of the road map — must shoulder its international responsibilities in that regard.

One might well wonder how peace can be achieved between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples when the Israeli Government has decided in principle to expel President Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestinian Authority and elected leader of the Palestinian people. One might also ask whether the Government of Israel, a Member State of the United Nations, is honouring its commitments under the Charter. The United Nations must intervene to put an end to that Israeli policy. Israel must respond to the international community's demands and must comply with international resolutions. It must respond positively to international efforts aimed at implementation of the road map, which provides both parties with international guarantees aimed at achieving peace based on the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State on all Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Such a solution would give the States in the region a historic opportunity to build a new Middle East. In that connection, we must warn that failure to commit to the establishment of a Palestinian State in conformity with

the road map would create a crisis with catastrophic results.

My country shares with many other Member States the view that peace in the Middle East region will not be true and lasting unless our approach is just and comprehensive. In that connection, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its support for Lebanon's right to restore the remaining Sheba'a farms and the Syrian Arab Republic's right to recover the Syrian Golan, occupied on 4 June 1967.

The war against Iraq in the first half of this year was only one link in the chain of wars that have been endured by the Middle East region. That war created a new reality, characterized mainly by the collapse of the former regime, the creation of a huge political and security vacuum and deterioration in basic services for Iraqi society. The continued lack of security in Iraq and the resulting loss of lives — in addition to the destruction of the United Nations Office and the escalation in assassinations — certainly do not help Iraq in this phase of re-establishing the Government and rebuilding the country.

Prompted by our concern about the situation in Iraq, we believe that efforts are needed to enable the Iraqis to assume full responsibility for managing their country. Iraq has an abundance of national experts in every field. These qualified Iraqi cadres are capable of leading the process of restoring security and of rebuilding and fully developing their country. Iraq also possesses enormous economic and human resources that could help it to regain its strength and to play its regional and international roles. Undoubtedly, an active role for the United Nations and its specialized agencies will help us to attain our common objective: unity and territorial integrity for Iraq and prosperity and security for all its people.

Committed to Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, we welcomed the formation of the transitional Governing Council. We believe it essential to deal with that political institution so that we begin to build the right foundations for post-war Iraq — including the provision of basic services and the creation of a political climate conducive to the establishment of a stable political system that will respond to the Iraqi people's wishes — as a prelude to beginning the reconstruction phase.

Stability and the consolidation of security are requirements of all peoples throughout the world. We in the Sultanate of Oman — like all other countries in the Middle East — have been following with interest and optimism the official contacts taking place in various conflict areas. We hope that the contacts and discussions between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning the islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates will enable the two countries to arrive at an effective mechanism to settle their dispute. In addition, we appreciate the initiatives by India and Pakistan aimed at starting a dialogue between them. Moreover, my country hopes that the two Koreas and other concerned parties will be able to reach an agreement that addresses the various outstanding issues through constructive dialogue and adherence to international conventions and resolutions. We hope that that part of the world will ultimately achieve peace and coexistence.

We also pay tribute to the peaceful efforts to solve the conflicts in Africa, and call on the international community to assist in developing a fair system to improve economic conditions and a mechanism to relieve the onerous burden of debt on African countries.

International policies have in recent years led to the emergence of various types of terrorist acts. All of us must pause and deeply focus on this phenomenon, which targets people's security and safety. We believe that it has become essential to study in a comprehensive and cooperative manner the root causes underlying this phenomenon. Although we fully support international efforts to combat terrorism by all available means, we must allocate part of the massive financial resources devoted to combating terrorism to help the least developed countries that may be fertile ground for terrorist activities.

There is no doubt that United Nations efforts in the field of disarmament are leading nowhere. They will remain an exercise in futility so long as Member States cannot count on an effective system of collective security safeguards. Without such a system, responsibility for assessments of the level and quality of weapons needed will be subjective and fall solely to individual Governments. This would open the door wide to further arms races, and hinder progress towards disarmament or the reduction of armaments.

While supporting the efforts to limit armaments, the Sultanate of Oman affirms the need to take practical measures in accordance with the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regime of mutual guarantees. My country signed a safeguards agreement with the IAEA on 28 June 2001 at the headquarters of the Agency in Vienna.

My country also believes that it is essential to promote cooperation between States to reduce the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons, which are the reason for most of the conflicts in the world. My country notes the efforts made by the United Nations to achieve the elimination of all lethal weapons from every corner of the earth and from outer space. My country supports all these efforts and underlines the responsibility of the international Organization for establishing a world order that is more capable of guaranteeing security for all States in a manner that reflects the reality of life in the third millennium. It should be consistent with partnership and with responsibilities, which are essential for the success of all efforts.

This session is being convened at a time of continuous and intertwined development at the world economic, financial and trade levels. Many economies still suffer from economic stagnation and recession.

The Sultanate of Oman appreciates the continued efforts of the International Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to achieve complementarity in their work so that they may confront the challenges that the countries of the world are now facing. These challenges include economic growth, sustainable development, poverty reduction and financial stability and balance.

Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since its accession to the World Trade Organization in October 2000, the Sultanate of Oman has taken great strides towards implementing its commitments to the Organization. The Sultanate has introduced many amendments and improvements to its systems, organizations and laws, and has enacted new legislation in conformity with the requirements of the World Trade Organization.

My country has also been following with great interest the ongoing negotiations in the framework of the World Trade Organization with a view to overcoming the obstacles and difficulties impeding its work. Here, we must point an important difference between developing countries and developed countries, in that the latter control the World Intellectual Property Organization agreements and other conventions. Such agreements should not be misused by multinational corporations in a manner that adds to the burdens of the least developed countries in the fields of pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs and technology transfer, which would only exacerbate the obstacles to trade liberalization that the World Trade Organization is trying to overcome. Although the WTO Council of Ministers issued a separate statement on safeguards for patented drugs, aimed at helping developing countries to combat serious and contagious diseases, such a step may not sufficiently protect least developed countries from being forced to bear excessive costs.

The Sultanate of Oman has worked hard at the regional level with its brothers and friends and through regional economic groupings, to enhance the climate for the liberalization of trade and the economy. In the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Sultanate participated in the establishment of the Gulf Customs Union at the beginning of this year. In the framework of the Arab League, we have also pushed forward the deadline for the establishment of a free-trade zone among the Arab States parties to the trade zone agreement to the beginning of January 2005 when full liberalization is expected to occur, opening the door to the free trade of Arab products and paving the way to an Arab common market.

At the local level, my country has continued its efforts to enhance the role of the private sector in the national economy, based on the market economy and free competition and a favourable economic and trade climate that aims at the achievement of a true investment and trade partnership with all countries of the world, in the hope that conditions will be conducive to linking the economy of Oman to the world economy.

Recognizing that the protection of the environment and its resources is a collective responsibility, my country's Government has been active in stimulating the role of Omani society and its effective contribution to this cause. Here, we to reaffirm our commitment to the basic principles adopted at the two earth summits, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, and in South Africa, in 2002. We believe that these principles constitute a scientific framework that will guarantee our world partnership and help us to shoulder our collective responsibility for the protection of the environment and its natural resources in the service of sustainable development.

We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the efforts and endeavours of the Secretary-General as reflected in his annual report, in which he details the achievements of the United Nations, as well as and the obstacles it faces, and sets out the strategies for the future for this Organization, which embodies the conscience and aspirations of the world. We support the proposals in the Secretary-General's report on developing and restructuring the organs of the United Nations to enable the Organization to reflect current political reality.

The United Nations should remain a true cornerstone of world policy and the main source of international legitimacy, so that countries may appeal to it for the prevention of wars and conflict. This is only possible through the effective pursuit of preventive diplomacy, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance of peace, enhancing world cooperation and dialogue among civilizations. This involves working towards resolving the problems of poverty and disease, protecting the environment, combating terrorism and bridging the gap between the rich countries of the North and the poor countries of the South.

Relations between the United Nations and regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security should be strengthened through the enhancement of weak regional structures to enable them to archive collective security in a world governed by technology and great population increases.

We believe that the United Nations represents international legitimacy. It is the crucible in which all regional and international efforts meld to realize the hopes and aspirations of our peoples and to confront the real challenges to peace, security and development in all their aspects. This can enhance relations and stability and spread a culture of peace and constructive dialogue among present and future generations to counter the logic of the threat of force or apprehensions about the future.

We hope that this session will be a success so that it may chart a vision for the future that points to ways to serve humanity and renew the Member States' trust in the Organization, total commitment to the implementation of its resolutions and respect for the provisions of the Charter.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to Mr. Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Musyoka (Kenya): I am pleased to take this opportunity to address the General Assembly. In the past year both Kenya and the United Nations have been struck by terrorism. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to convey to the Secretary-General, through you, Mr. President, our profound condolences following the heartless and senseless attack on United Nations premises in Baghdad last August. Several United Nations personnel, including Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq, lost their lives during this attack. Mr. Vieira de Mello — an elegant, highly intelligent man — was a calm voice of reason in a sea of troubles. As an assembly of nations, we may have lost his voice, but we should not lose sight of his vision and hopes.

Terrorism has become a disturbing trend. We who live in Kenya know this all too well, as we do not have the option of ignoring the threat of terror. The people of Kenya have been targeted by terrorists on two recent, separate occasions — in 1998 and in 2002. After the 2002 attacks in Mombasa, Kenya's economy was almost brought to its knees because of the various unhelpful measures from without that discouraged travel to our country. As a result, we have been doubly victimized. Against this backdrop, Kenya is totally committed to the fight against terrorism, as we have been subjected to the loss of innocent lives, untold human suffering, loss of property and social and economic hardship. We empathize with others, including the residents of this city and, indeed, the American people, who bore the brunt of unprecedented terror in the September 2001 attack.

We are convinced that this fight can be won only by collective action by the community of nations. We should all address terrorism under the rubric of the United Nations and develop measured, long-term strategies to eliminate terrorism once and for all. Self-interest and unilateral action do not provide a firm basis for a global alliance against terrorism. Only principled international solidarity will defeat terrorism.

My delegation wishes to commend the Secretary-General for the efforts made in enhancing the utilization of the United Nations Office at Nairobi. I note with satisfaction that construction of additional administration and social facilities at the United

Nations Complex at Gigiri has commenced. Further, following the elevation of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) to a fully fledged United Nations programme, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/206, it is the desire of the Government of Kenya to see maximum utilization of those facilities through the hosting of additional meetings and conferences in Nairobi. This will be a clear demonstration of our support for the relevant General Assembly resolutions on this issue.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed to the conflicts raging in many parts of Africa. Kenya has been actively involved in efforts to address this issue and hosts the Nairobi Secretariat on Small Arms and Light Weapons, a regional initiative involving 10 countries of the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. In addition, at the Biennial Meeting of States on small arms and light weapons, held in New York in July 2003, Kenya presented a report on the activities of the Nairobi Secretariat as well as on the measures undertaken by the Government of Kenya at the national level to curb that menace. In this regard, we call upon the international community to provide the requisite resources in our joint effort to fight the proliferation of such arms.

Wars and conflicts continue, and peace, stability and socio-economic development remain elusive, particularly in Africa. Kenya therefore continues to give priority to the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of conflicts. We have spearheaded the Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) peace processes on the conflicts in southern Sudan and in Somalia. Negotiations on a peaceful solution are ongoing in both Naivasha and Nairobi, respectively.

It is with profound satisfaction that we recall the historic event that occurred on 22 September of this year, when the warring parties in the Sudan signed a truly landmark agreement in Naivasha, Kenya. That agreement, which addresses transitional security arrangements, will no doubt provide the basis for a bright and prosperous future for the people of the Sudan. The parties will reconvene in the next two weeks to discuss power sharing, wealth sharing and the status of the three disputed regions of the Sudan. Indeed, the peace process in the Sudan has become irreversible.

I therefore wish to pay tribute to the Government of the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), IGAD and the international Partners Forum for their concerted efforts and dedication to the peace process. This historic event is a concrete example of multilateralism at work. It is indeed a beacon of hope and a manifestation of the fact that, with goodwill and political will, peace is achievable. I am happy to say that not all news emanating from Africa is all about doom and gloom.

However, in order to consolidate and guarantee a long-lasting peace, it is vital for the international community to play a greater role in the process. In this connection, I would like to urge the United Nations to play a leadership role in the post-conflict reconstruction of the Sudan and to request Member States to support that reconstruction.

On the Somali peace process, I am happy to note that there is encouraging progress in the negotiations, and we are hopeful that there will be a fruitful outcome. Just two weeks ago, representatives adopted the charter, and elections will soon be held. Kenya therefore encourages the parties concerned to consolidate and take advantage of the gains made so far. We emphasize that the peace process should be all-inclusive, and we call upon the President of the Transitional National Government, Mr. Abdikassim, to return to the negotiating table in Nairobi and on the other faction leaders to accept his participation. By the same token, we call upon our partners and the international community to continue supporting both peace processes.

We commend the efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore normalcy in Liberia. While appreciating the important role the United Nations plays in consolidating peace and stability in the world, Kenya advocates greater United Nations participation in African initiatives, such as the peace processes led by IGAD and ECOWAS.

We are concerned at the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. Kenya notes with regret that a lasting solution to the question of Palestine remains elusive despite the various initiatives undertaken and efforts made to address the problem. We should not lose sight of the objective of establishing a viable Palestinian State, as envisaged in

United Nations resolutions. Similarly, it should be recalled that, in order to ensure a durable solution to the conflict, it is important to take full account of the right of Israel to exist within safe and secure borders. We therefore reiterate our call to the parties to the conflict, as well as to the other players involved, to exercise restraint and to give priority to dialogue.

Another area of concern in the Middle East is Iraq. The people of that country have yet to find peace and stability, without which any hope of national reconstruction will be in vain. It is, however, encouraging to observe that the international community now shares the common view that the United Nations should play a greater role in rebuilding that country. It is our hope that that consensus will be translated into action soon.

For peace and stability to flourish, good governance is a necessity. This challenge is one that Kenya has been able to meet. In December 2002, Kenya saw a historic moment, when we held general elections which were universally recognized as free, fair and, indeed, democratic. Every citizen of Kenya was provided an opportunity to have a voice in determining his or her Government, successful and strong evidence that Africans can and will embrace democracy and that we, the proud descendants of the oldest civilizations in history, are ready to determine our destiny. I would like to recall the words of a great son of Africa, the late Patrice Lumumba:

> "History will one day have its say ... Africa will write its own history, and it will be to the north and to the south of the Sahara, a history of glory and dignity".

We are prepared as a country, under the leadership of President Mwai Kibaki, to play our part in promoting development and democracy.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) commands the support of all of us and, if implemented in a holistic manner, it will guarantee sustainable development for the African continent. NEPAD is a symbol of renewed commitment by the region's States, and should thus be accorded the necessary support by the international community. We appreciate the warm reception accorded to NEPAD by both the United Nations and our development partners. We are committed to the successful implementation of this arrangement. For its part, Kenya, which is a member of the Steering Committee, has established a National NEPAD Secretariat and will host a regional summit on NEPAD for East Africa, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa next month to take stock of its implementation.

The United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s, particularly the Rio Summit, the Millennium Summit, the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, the Monterrey Conference and, finally, the Johannesburg Summit, have equipped us with numerous ideas and commitments to tackle the problems facing the world today. Despite this wealth of ideas and commitments, we have continued to slip backwards in the fight against poverty, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and hunger.

My message to all of us today is that we must recommit ourselves; let us implement what we have agreed on to make the world a better place for all. We welcome the adoption by the Assembly of resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the implementation of United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. We urge all stakeholders identified in this resolution to play their part to ensure its full and speedy implementation.

The majority of African countries are among the poorest in the world. The situation has been compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has ravaged the continent and reversed the socio-economic gains made since independence. To counter the ravages of the pandemic, the Kenya Government has put in place various measures to curb further spread of HIV/AIDS. As a result of these efforts, prevalence rates have been significantly reduced in the last four years. However, much still needs to be done in this area.

Last month, Kenya hosted the thirteenth International Conference on AIDS and Sexually-Transmitted Diseases. This forum brought together over 6,000 delegates from all over the world to discuss urgent measures that we all must take to combat the pandemic. We call upon the international community to intensify its efforts in fighting the scourge by, among others things, the provision of adequate financial resources, as well as enhanced access to antiretroviral drugs, for those infected.

We welcome the recent agreement arrived at in the World Trade Organization (WTO) enabling developing countries to import HIV/AIDS generic drugs. We urge developed countries and drug manufacturers to respect the decision of the WTO and

to cooperate with developing countries to facilitate accessibility of antiretroviral drugs to all HIV/AIDS sufferers.

Kenya regrets the collapse of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún last month. However, we in the developing world are ready to continue with negotiations as long as our partners are prepared to work with us as equal players.

In conclusion, I wish to extend to Assembly President Mr. Julian Hunte, on behalf of my delegation, congratulations on his unanimous election as President of the fifty-eighth regular session of the General Assembly.

The challenges that I have addressed today have no respect for boundaries or sovereignty or, indeed, historical realities. They represent a collective problem for this Assembly and one that we must face together as an international organization. It is my hope that the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly will address with courage the issues before the international community. I wish to assure the Assembly President of the full support of the Kenyan delegation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): It gives me great pleasure to extend to Julian Hunte warm congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor for his invaluable contribution to the success of the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly. Allow me also to extend my sincere appreciation to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great effort he has been making to maintain the integrity of the United Nations in this difficult period in the history of the Organization. I wish also to commend the Secretary-General for his invaluable contribution in enhancing humanitarian assistance, fostering development cooperation and strengthening our esteemed Organization.

I wish to preface my brief statement with sincere appreciation for all those who have responded with generous support to assist the people of Ethiopia to overcome the consequences of a devastating and extended drought, which put at risk more than a dozen million of our compatriots. The responses from the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and many others were indeed as timely, as they were generous. The people of Ethiopia are grateful for this demonstration of solidarity.

We in Ethiopia are the first to realize that this state of affairs in our country cannot continue. Our people cannot be allowed to be vulnerable to famine every other year because of drought. It is a must for us, and a matter of national survival and dignity, to ensure food security for our people in the shortest time possible. But this can be done only when our people are given respite for peace and are able to fully concentrate on economic development.

We have come to be convinced that, for our strategy on economic development and good governance to succeed, we need to enhance our capacity in human resources development and institution-building. It is imperative for us to focus on capacity-building and to make it a priority.

It has also been found critical that we expand further our decentralization exercise, with a view to empowering our people at the grass-roots level.

We have embarked on a fundamental shift in the country's foreign and national security policy, focusing on the internal needs of our country and on ensuring its viability, which can be realized only through rapid economic development and the nurturing of democratic governance.

Like many countries in our continent, and perhaps more than most, Ethiopia has suffered at length as the result of conflict and war and its consequences. The internal causes of the absence of peace and tranquillity in our country were removed, once and for all, when the military dictatorship came to an end and when we embarked upon laying the foundations for a democratic and just society 12 years ago.

Until 1998, Ethiopia made great progress that, if continued, would certainly have made us far more prepared to withstand the consequences of the extended drought last year and the year before. But the Assembly recalls what befell Ethiopia in 1998. The strong momentum we had managed to create for rapid economic development was pushed off track by the aggression we suffered in May 1998, which took us two years to reverse. Having reversed the aggression, Ethiopia showed its unflinching respect for the principles of international law by taking the lead in

ensuring the signing of the Algiers Agreement. With little hesitation, Ethiopia withdrew from territory that it had seized in a counteroffensive to expel the invading army from its territory and to make room for the Temporary Security Zone, to which the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) was subsequently deployed.

We have now come to the point at which the United Nations will have to take greater interest to ensure that the hopes and promises engendered by the Algiers Agreement are fulfilled. The Agreement was designed to lead to durable peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. It was not meant to punish the victim of aggression. This is why Ethiopia has felt it necessary to call on the Security Council to help us achieve the hopes implicit in the Algiers Agreement.

Ethiopia is committed always to being a peaceful country. We have always been second to none in our commitment to the principles of international law. This will remain one of our people's distinguishing features. This is a tradition we will continue to maintain and foster. This is also how we intend to tackle the present complications in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement.

Few regions of the world have suffered as a result of conflict as much as the Horn of Africa. We in Ethiopia are committed, along with others in our subregion, to change this existing reality. With the progress that continues to be made in the peace process to resolve the conflict in Somalia, we are today more hopeful than ever that the long saga of the Somali people might be about to end.

I wish to seize this opportunity to thank the European Union, the United Nations and others for the invaluable assistance that they have continued to give to ensure the success of the peace process in Somalia. Little progress could have been made without that support. The frontline countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will need even greater support for the success of the peace process in Somalia, which is now entering into its most critical phase.

We are also deeply encouraged by the peace process aimed at resolving the conflict in the Sudan, which has also entered into a very delicate phase. The parties deserve to be commended for the great resolve they are demonstrating in addressing the common challenges they are facing. The Framework Agreement on Security Arrangements for the Interim Period, signed on 25 September between the two parties, represents a major breakthrough, which will no doubt help lay the foundation for more progress in other areas. We would like to thank all those, the United States Government in particular, who have made contributions to the progress that has been made in the peace process in the Sudan.

These developments show that the situation in the Horn of Africa is not hopeless. The challenges we are facing are nonetheless formidable. We in Ethiopia are determined to contribute more than our share to assist in the regeneration of our subregion, which has also been the target of international terrorism. The achievement of peace and national reconciliation in Somalia is extremely critical in the fight against this scourge as well. That is why all those who are willing to join in the fight against international terrorism should be automatically supportive of the peace effort by IGAD in Somalia.

As a country from a region that has lost much and has stayed far behind in development because of the absence of peace, Ethiopia feels solidarity with all the peoples of the Middle East who yearn for peace, security and justice. As a people very close to the Middle East, Ethiopia has close affinity with the people of Palestine and with the people of Israel. It is our hope that the suffering of both will end soon and that the hope held up by the road map will be realized.

The hope we have for economic development and the prospect we see for peace in our subregion can hardly be made a reality without international conditions that are conducive to countries such as Ethiopia to make progress.

In this respect, the general situation is not very promising. Under the circumstances, without greater commitment by the developed world to the rapid economic development of Africa, countries such as Ethiopia will hardly be in a position to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

There is, without any doubt, an urgent need for increasing the quality and the level of assistance by the developed world to Africa. There is a critical need for addressing the problems surrounding issues related to subsidies and the access of products from African countries to developed countries' markets. International solidarity and the promotion of our

mutual interests make it imperative that a lasting solution is found to the debt burden.

Africa is passing through a very difficult and critical period. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is wreaking havoc in the continent. As is now widely acknowledged, this is not simply a health crisis. The pandemic is also an economic, security and social crisis with broad and potentially devastating implications. Hence, this is a challenge not only for Africa, but also for the entire world.

But Africa is not asking to be rescued by the international community without discharging its own responsibilities. What Africa is asking is to be given a break, as many have been given in the past at some point in their history. In fact, what is involved here are mutual obligations. This is the overriding principle upon which the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is based. It is Ethiopia's hope that NEPAD will be taken more seriously as a framework for expanding the cooperation between Africa and the developed countries in the interest of ensuring success in Africa's fight for prosperity and development, and for a safe, peaceful and truly globalized world.

The United Nations is facing today one of the most difficult periods in its close to 60 years of history. Its legitimacy and credibility is being increasingly questioned. Many have also questioned its effectiveness. Not a few have also wondered on many occasions whether they have always been assisted by the Organization in nurturing and fostering peace. My own country has also been disappointed in the past. But we have never abandoned hope in the United Nations or in multilateralism, because we know, at the end of the day, that the United Nations is indispensable. That is why Ethiopia will always be committed to the United Nations and its ideals.

It is our hope that all Member States, big and small, will be fully committed to the United Nations and its ideals and carry out the long overdue reform of the Organization with a view to making it more effective.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Antanas Valionis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valionis (Lithuania): I would like first of all to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan for his work as President of the General Assembly at its previous session. We appreciate the knowledge and skilful leadership of the current President, Mr. Julian R. Hunte of Saint Lucia, and wish him a year of constructive dialogue and cooperation.

This year was one of shocking news and human tragedy. We lost a noble man and a distinguished diplomat, our friend Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and many others who happened to be on duty at the United Nations premises on that tragic day in Baghdad. More recently, we paid a final tribute to Ms. Anna Lindh, the late Swedish Foreign Minister and our good friend, who fell victim to another act of human insanity. We grieve for those lost, but we also remember their work and unfinished missions.

Iraq is one such example of unfinished business. The restoration of sovereignty and the implementation of a political process leading to the establishment of a fully representative Government through democratic elections is our primary goal. State-building, however, is not an overnight process. Only through coordinated effort and close international cooperation can we expect to rebuild a free and peaceful Iraq. The United Nations, with its unique experience and legitimacy, is essential to efforts to help the Iraqi people recover their sovereignty. In Iraq, the first signs of recovery are already visible, as demonstrated by the appointment of a Governing Council and the formation of a preparatory constitutional committee. These positive developments should be supported and encouraged. Thus we look forward to the forthcoming Madrid conference, which will address many issues important to Iraq's future. International support is indispensable, and sometimes even critical, to people coping with the legacy of a fallen dictatorship.

The current setbacks in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians must not prevent the implementation of the road map. The vision of two States living side by side in peace and prosperity remains the only viable option.

The real strength of our power as an international community continues to lie in our resolve to deal collectively with critical issues. The recent report of the Secretary-General posed hard questions. We need to find consensus on the conceptual and political framework for the operation of the United Nations in

the coming decades. Lithuania firmly supports the United Nations as it pursues the goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We share the view that the multilateral institutions must be updated and reinforced. It is absolutely essential that the United Nations and its principal organs be seen as relevant and effective. Lithuania is ready to contribute to the goal of building an international order based on effective multilateral institutions and on the fundamental goals of the United Nations Charter.

Lasting peace is our collective responsibility. The Security Council must be able to take a leadership role in maintaining international peace and security. Thus Lithuania supports substantial reform to ensure a better and more equitable representation in both categories, permanent and non-permanent, through the inclusion of Germany and Japan, as well as certain other leading countries from other regions.

Lithuania welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to address responses to current challenges. The European Convention, which prepared the draft European Constitution, is a good example of how such fundamental policy questions could be dealt with.

Regrettably, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continue to be on the list of our chief security concerns. The Thessaloniki European Council Declaration on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the European Union's (EU) basic principles and action plan against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are well-defined responses. Lithuania associates itself with them and will contribute to their implementation. I should also like to recall the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which is yet another result of multilateral efforts and is worthy of global universalization.

Global stability also requires regional efforts. In this context, I would like to note with satisfaction that next year Lithuania and other Central and Eastern European countries will join the EU and NATO, thus expanding the zone of stability and democracy in Europe. Moreover, our accession will have an important positive effect on the nations at the new borders of the EU and NATO. Lithuania is determined to continue its good-neighbourly policies and to develop closer relations with its new EU neighbours. I should also like to draw attention to Baltic-Caucasus regional cooperation, which is already developing a number of successful initiatives.

We are witnessing the willingness to adopt more effective measures to combat terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Invariably, more conventional challenges can be dealt with by transparency and confidence-building activities. As a new State party to the Ottawa Convention, Lithuania is committed to contributing practically to its implementation and promotion. We feel that it is increasingly important to facilitate regional dialogue and action that contributes to the abolition of anti-personnel mines and the clearing up of old unexploded ordnance. We have already started working with interested parties in that respect.

Democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are undoubtedly the most important in our system of values. In view of the process of globalization, securing this system is a great challenge. Such global afflictions as poverty, hunger, unsustainable development, disastrous massive pandemics and grave violations of human rights raise before us the vital task of standing together in order to secure the future of our children.

Stable conditions for peace cannot be created without addressing poverty and eradicating social exclusion. We should, therefore, put all our efforts towards achieving the goals that we agreed to in the Millennium Declaration. Lithuania, as a future member of the European Union, is also assuming its responsibilities as an emerging donor in this regard.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Sir Rabbie Namaliu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Papua New Guinea.

Sir Rabbie Namaliu (Papua New Guinea): Let me from the outset congratulate the President of this fifty-eighth General Assembly on his election. I have no doubt that his election by the international community is a recognition of his vast diplomatic skills and leadership qualities. His election is also recognition of the coming of age of small island States. I also wish to thank his predecessor Mr. Jan Kavan for his stewardship of the work of the fifty-seventh General Assembly.

Please allow me also to pay tribute to the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan and his staff for their dedication and commitment in dealing with many pressing international issues that confront us today.

I join others delegations in expressing our Government's sincere condolences to the families of the United Nations staff, including the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who lost their lives in Baghdad on 16 August 2003.

The attacks were barbaric and against the principles of freedom, democracy and peace as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. They must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

In pursuit of our commitments to combat international terrorism, I am happy to report that Papua New Guinea has substantially complied with United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

Our Parliament recently ratified many of the conventions and protocols to combat global terrorism. Yesterday, I personally deposited four conventions with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Having fulfilled these requirements, Papua New Guinea is now faced with resource constraints and other challenges to implementing the treaty obligations. This situation is further exacerbated by other threats, such as illicit drug trafficking, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, smuggling of humans and money-laundering.

In the Pacific Islands region, we have taken positive initiatives to collectively deal with these threats. The Nasonini and Biketawa Declarations agreed to by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders provide the framework for cooperation in dealing with these threats.

In the wider Asia-Pacific Region, the Southwest Pacific Dialogue has met twice, in addition to the annual Bali security meetings, to discuss political and security issues facing the region. The Dialogue partners include Indonesia, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.

Whilst issues of greater political and security risks are of concern to us, the real threat at this stage is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Small arms and light weapons have not only destabilized regions, sparked, fuelled and prolonged conflicts but also obstructed relief programmes, undermined peace initiatives, exacerbated human rights abuses, hampered development and fostered a culture of violence. There are no international treaties or other legal instruments for dealing effectively with this category of weapons.

In this context, Papua New Guinea welcomes the call for the immediate and full implementation of the 2001 Plan of Action on small arms aimed at curbing and eradicating the flow of small arms and light weapons.

Let me place this in the context of the crisis in our province of Bougainville where the proliferation of small arms and light weapons contributed to the prolonging of the conflict in the province.

With regard to progress in Bougainville, we have completed the second stage of the arms disposal programme, which has been verified by the United Nations. The regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) has now been wound down and replaced by the Bougainville Transition Team (BTT). With the help of the United Nations the Team will maintain logistical support for the peace process and assist in other operational areas.

I would also like to inform this Assembly that the peace process under the Bougainville Agreement has reached the crucial third stage under the constitutional amendments agreed to by the Papua New Guinea National Parliament. While there are delays, every necessary step is being taken by all parties concerned to ensure that the momentum built to date is not being unduly hampered.

My Government therefore seeks the understanding of the international community, especially the members of the Security Council, to help us fully achieve all tasks agreed to under the Bougainville Peace Agreement. This will signal a win-win story for all, the United Nations, our Government and the people of Bougainville.

I express our Government's profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for the invaluable efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), including those of Ambassador Noel Sinclair.

I also acknowledge and thank our regional neighbours — Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Solomon

Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, for their immense contribution to the peace process.

With regard to the conflict in the Solomon Islands, the package of assistance developed and agreed to by the Pacific Islands foreign ministers and later adopted at the Pacific Islands Forum leaders meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, last month has helped restore peace and normalcy in that country. It was undertaken at the request of the Government of the Solomon Islands under the Biketawa Declaration.

The Australian-led operation includes the deployment of both civilian police and armed peacekeepers from many of the Pacific island member States, including my own. The cooperation among member States underlines the strength of regional peacekeeping, if done properly.

On the Israeli and Palestinian issue, we were encouraged by the general positive signs of progress towards resolving and securing peace based on the United States-led road map. However, this has deteriorated in recent weeks. We call upon all parties involved to exercise maximum restraint and work towards the peaceful settlement of this crisis.

We are pleased that the Quartet has recently convened in New York to review the road map. We look forward to their strong leadership in assisting to resolve this long outstanding issue. Fighting and violence will not resolve the conflict. We join the international community's call for both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to make renewed efforts at the negotiating table, to cease all hostilities by both sides and to find a permanent solution to the problem.

Our belief is that diplomacy is the only means by which States may join as partners and co-operate in bringing about changes which promote peace, economic and social progress for all people, both in principle and, more importantly, in practice.

We believe that this too should apply to the situation in Iraq. We support the work being done in the Security Council to adopt a new resolution on a role of the United Nations that would provide a framework for the widest possible participation of United Nations Member States in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Regarding United Nations reforms, Papua New Guinea commends the leadership demonstrated by the Secretary-General in the current work being done to reform the main organs of the United Nations, the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies and the Security Council.

We support the expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent membership categories. Reforms should take into account the interests of both developed and developing countries.

All permanent members in an expanded Council should have similar rights and privileges. However, the use of the veto power should be curtailed and applied only to Chapter VII issues. In doing so, we must move swiftly to complete the reforms of the United Nations system — including the Security Council — so we can restore the capacity of the multilateral system to better serve us all.

Papua New Guinea fully endorses the recent Declarations and Plans of Action of the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg Conferences. We are resolved to meet the challenges of poverty eradication; hunger; illiteracy; environmental degradation; climate change; and HIV/AIDS, malaria and other preventable diseases. We are also committed to addressing issues of good governance. It is the desire of the Government of Papua New Guinea to incorporate the Millennium Development Goals into our national development priorities. We are in the process of adopting the medium-term development strategy, which is aimed at redirecting development to the rural areas where the majority of our people live. We encourage the international community — including all stakeholders in developed and developing countries — to continue to make resources available to fully implement those Declarations and Plans of Action.

Like other developing member States of the Pacific Islands Forum, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We fully support its 10-year review process, which will take place at the international meeting to be held in Mauritius in August 2004. We call upon our regional and international development partners to support the review process, as was the case with the recent conferences of the least developed and landlocked developing countries.

The recent breakdown in the World Trade Organization negotiations in Cancún is of great concern to us all. However, that should not be a barrier to further negotiations to arrive at a fair and equitable

arrangement that provides for the interests of all nations.

On a more targeted front, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries — of which Papua New Guinea is a member — are now negotiating with the European Union for a possible economic partnership agreement. It is important that the main objective be the eradication of poverty, and therefore that trade preferences enjoyed by ACP countries under successive Lomé Conventions and under the current Cotonou Agreements not be eroded.

The small island developing States of the Pacific region are among the custodians of the largest ocean space. The Pacific Ocean is rich in natural marine resources. The recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, again reaffirmed the Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy, which aims to ensure the future sustainable use of our oceans and their resources by our island communities, in close cooperation with our development partners.

The countries of the region, however, have limited human, financial and technological capacities to control, manage and secure those resources for the benefit of our current and future generations. In protecting our vast marine resources, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders reiterate their serious concerns about the shipment of radioactive materials through the region. They also call upon States engaged in those activities to accept full responsibility and liability for compensation for any damage that may result, directly or indirectly, from the transportation of radioactive material through the region. The two accidents that happened in the Atlantic Ocean last year underline the reality of our concerns.

Papua New Guinea, together with other small island developing States, continues to express deep concerns about the adverse impact of climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise, particularly on the small, low-lying islands that are already experiencing extreme hardships. We will continue to stress the urgent need for developed countries to exert strong leadership in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Papua New Guinea has signed and ratified both the United Nations Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol paves the way forward for developed countries to fulfil their obligations under the Climate Change Convention. We believe that the larger developing countries also have an obligation to take concrete actions in reducing their gas emissions. We welcome the support of Japan, the European Community and China for the Kyoto Protocol. We urge the United States, the Russian Federation and Australia to join the global efforts aimed at addressing that issue, including ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Papua New Guinea is also not immune to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Tuberculosis and malaria are again on the rise, so there is an urgent need to find preventive measures for those diseases. I am, however, pleased to report that the Papua New Guinea Parliament this year enacted legislation aimed at dealing with the scourge by assisting with prevention and awareness programmes to reduce and limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, which threatens the lives of our people, particularly mothers and children. In that regard, we thank Australia for its substantial assistance. We also acknowledge continuing support from other development partners, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization.

We also support the work of the United Nations in relation to the protection and advancement of the rights of women and children. While we have ratified the appropriate conventions, we realize that we must do more. We acknowledge the support being provided by our development partners, including United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF.

Papua New Guinea fully concurs with the calls by the international community to reform and restructure the charters and mandates of the two Bretton Woods institutions. Their lending policies should be made more lenient and flexible with regard to assisting developing countries in their developmental efforts.

Among the greatest achievements of the United Nations is the process of decolonization. But that process will not be completed — as it must be — until the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories have exercised their inalienable right to self-determination. The United Nations should continue to monitor developments in New Caledonia, Tokelau and the other 14 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the United Nations decolonization list on a case-by-case basis. Neither size, remoteness nor population density should

be allowed to limit the exercise of this inalienable right. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting held in Auckland last month once again reaffirmed its support for that principle.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm Papua New Guinea's firm commitment to the timeless principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We also strongly advocate that it is Papua New Guinea's position that diplomacy, through positive dialogue, is the key to addressing these challenges.

Finally, Papua New Guinea believes that a greater challenge for all United Nations Member States is to work together as genuine partners. That will serve as an effective tool for implementing our collective goal: to create a better and more secure world, both today and for future generations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Marjatta Rasi, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Rasi (Finland): I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Multilateralism and the United Nations have gone through a trying time since the last session of the General Assembly began. At the same time that multilateralism has been challenged by unilateral actions, it has been proved that multilateralism and multilateral cooperation — as well as the United Nations — are needed, perhaps more than ever before. The discussions at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting in Cancún also point to the need for open and broad discussions on preserving a multilateral trading system based on mutually agreed rules.

International cooperation is needed in crisis management and prevention, in disarmament and arms control, in promoting human rights and international law in general, in enhancing sustainable development, in strengthening global governance with regard to environmental issues and in creating coherence and cooperation on economic and social issues, among other things. In order to do this, a more efficient and effective United Nations is needed. The United Nations system must deliver solutions to increasingly complicated challenges, be it Iraq, the Middle East, coherence between trade and development, or financing for development. Through their political will, Member States should give the United Nations the support it requires in order for it to be a true actor in world affairs. We need to be more efficient and more result-oriented.

The development and strengthening of the United Nations pose a major challenge at this particular juncture. United Nations structures — the Security Council included — require reform, and the whole Organization requires better resources. This is a prerequisite also for a comprehensive implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which forms a demanding agenda for the United Nations for years to come.

Despite different emphases and definitions given to freedom of action or joint actions, all the prerequisites exist for strengthening multilateral cooperation. As a member of the European Union, Finland is involved in the discussion on the significance of multilateralism and on the terms for promoting global security. This, too, should be one of the main topics in this session of the Assembly.

In addition to what was said in the Italy's statement on behalf of the European Union, I should like to focus on two issues that require multilateral cooperation in particular: the issue of harnessing globalization and that of weapons of mass destruction.

The biggest challenges in the future will be those to international peace and security, which become broader and broader in their scope, and the globalization process, as well as managing these two together through multilateral cooperation.

Globalization affects everyone. Some can benefit from it. Some become more marginalized by it. Globalization stems from a countless number of decisions made in the private sector and beneath or outside public institutions. But we must be able to influence, through the United Nations and other international organizations, corporate and public sector decisions that direct globalization. There are many ongoing processes that try to make globalization more inclusive and allow everybody to share its benefits.

The Finnish Government, together with the Tanzanian Government, is launching the Helsinki Process on globalization and democracy. Ultimately, the global governance pursued by the Helsinki Process is characterized by the democratization of international

relations, by the way that globalization and its by-products can be managed through more equal participation in deciding on international rules and norms. One of the key tasks of the process will be to devise and develop new solutions for global problems. We will also focus on the global economic agenda and on human security.

The international players in globalization include, in addition to States and multinational companies, the continually growing network of non-governmental organizations. Many of those organizations take a critical or negative stand on globalization, but do not hesitate to adopt procedures that are characteristic of globalization or to build networks across national borders. Out of a vast array of organizations, I could name two that are perceived as opposite: the World Economic Forum and the World Social Forum. Both, however, are concerned with the same challenges in the same world. One of the aims of the Helsinki Process is to bring these two processes closer to each other.

A global approach to international peace and security and a multilateral security system based on cooperation are largely axiomatic principles for Finland and for our partners in the European Union. But security problems linked to globalization, and solutions to them, threaten to divide the international community. Peace is much more than the absence of war nowadays. Development and peace are inseparably intertwined, and both of them are being affected by globalization.

Another major issue that requires multilateral cooperation is weapons of mass destruction and prevention of their proliferation.

Effective global governance requires universally agreed norms and rules setting standards for behaviour to be followed by all States as well as by non-State actors. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is clearly an issue that affects the international community as a whole. No State can ignore these dangers. Today more than ever, we need to step up our collective efforts to halt the proliferation worldwide. The most effective way to address global security threats is the multilateral system of binding international agreements. The existing system of treaties, built over the decades, needs to be strengthened, not weakened. We need to reinforce our commitment to the prohibition of chemical and biological weapons and to the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, with the objective of their total elimination.

Promoting adherence to multilateral treaties and obligations is not enough. It is equally important to ensure that commitments are fully implemented. The international community cannot tolerate precedents of non-compliance with the legal undertakings, which would put at stake the whole non-proliferation regime.

In cases where States have difficulties in implementing treaty obligations due to lack of legal or technical verification expertise, appropriate support and assistance should be offered by the relevant organizations and participating States.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of our efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons. In our view, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty constitutes an essential and irreplaceable building block for containing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, thus contributing to nuclear disarmament. Finland attaches great importance to its entry into force. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

In combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction, new initiatives and new approaches are called for. In order to complement international instruments, we need fresh perspectives on how to confront the problem of weapons of mass destruction. Finland welcomes new efforts, open to all, such as the G-8 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

The United Nations and in particular the Security Council have the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Finland is in favour of enhancing the role of the United Nations in issues related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We agree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations and the Security Council should look at the enforcement of regimes against weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations has valuable expertise and experience in verification. Finland believes that this verification and inspection competence should be maintained.

By focusing on weapons of mass destruction, I do not want to suggest that small arms are any less dangerous. They need due and growing attention by the international community. In some countries and in

some crises small arms are a means of massive destruction and a major cause of loss of life, mostly of civilians.

The multilateral institutions should respond to new challenges. Being multilateral is not sufficient in itself. In the work of the General Assembly Finland underlines the importance of setting clear priorities, tackling the issues that are most relevant in today's security environment. People throughout the world might find it difficult to understand the Organization's trying to resolve the problems of yesterday's world.

Before concluding, let me express my Government's deep satisfaction with the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has become a reality and is operational. The ICC is the cornerstone of efforts to enhance respect for international humanitarian law and human rights. We remain committed to ensuring the Court's success and appeal to States which have not yet ratified the Rome Statute to become parties to it.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vinci Niel Clodumar, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Clodumar (Nauru): It gives me great pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Rene Harris, President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nauru, who had to cancel his trip to New York at the last minute due to pressing matters at home. President Harris has asked me to convey to Mr. Julian Hunte warmest congratulations on his assumption of the stewardship of the Assembly. As a small island developing State, Nauru is extremely proud to be associated with the Caribbean Community on Mr. Hunte's marvellous achievement, which gives us hope that we in the Pacific will also have the opportunity to preside over the Assembly.

My delegation would like, through him, to commend His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, for his excellent leadership and the great efforts that he made, particularly in tackling the difficult issues that have plagued the revitalization of the General Assembly as the premier organ of the United Nations. The President has pledged to continue the good work that has been done in these areas, and he can count on Nauru's full cooperation.

Peace and security — or, more correctly, the lack of it — is still the main focus of the United Nations 58 years after its inception. In the past 24 months, we have seen the internationalization of terrorism manifest itself out of a cocktail of hatred, desperation and fanaticism that has spread its tentacles from the Middle East into the international arena. It is unconventional, clandestine, and indiscriminate with respect to its victims. We are also seeing an increase in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction after a period of relative calm, and this is further exacerbating the situation.

The sum of these two nightmarish threats is a cause for concern, and States that feel uniquely vulnerable to terrorist acts are considering the real possibility of terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. That scenario has forced such States to develop the antidote of unilateral action primed with a pre-emptive strike policy.

We saw it in action in Afghanistan and, six months ago in Iraq, just as President Bush said we would if the Security Council failed to walk the talk of resolution 1441 (2002), which called for the disarmament by Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Nauru is disappointed that President Bush did not refer in his statement last week to the status of the coalition's search for stockpiles of these weapons, and we are puzzled as to why it is hard to find them when intelligence indicated that the Iraqis could arm and unleash them so as to hit the United Kingdom within 45 minutes.

My delegation considers the antidote to which I referred to be the catalyst in the new wave of nuclear weapons proliferation, and it is not a coincidence that the countries singled out as part of the "axis of evil" are being accused of developing nuclear weapons. Nauru joins the appeal to the countries concerned to observe their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out inspections and verify that nuclear weapons are not being developed.

In all of this, we are certain of one thing: that the major casualty of the current state of affairs is the innocence of the United Nations, which was mortally wounded in Baghdad when the lives of 22 dedicated United Nations servants were lost, including that of the

revered Sergio Vieira de Mello, and more than 100 were injured.

The people of Nauru join the United Nations family in mourning the victims of that tragedy, and our heartfelt condolences go to the bereaved families. That despicable act of terror has cast a shadow over the safety and security of United Nations personnel everywhere. The clarity of its emblem, which stood for tolerance, hope and impartiality and which had acted as a shield against attack, may have been blurred by its subservient role to the administering force in Iraq.

In the light of the facts before us, Nauru fully agrees with the assessment made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his bold and gutsy statement that the Organization has "come to a fork in the road" and that we are in a moment of time that is "no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 3*)

Nauru fully supports the proposal to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities to review threats to peace and security and other global challenges insofar as these may influence or be connected with such threats. Nauru strongly believes in multilateralism as a key tool in resolving contemporary problems in all of their complexity.

The Security Council should be at the centre of our collective efforts in maintaining peace and resolving conflict. At the same time, the Council must have at its disposal the means of making evaluations and taking collective action. Most importantly, it must have the will to act quickly and decisively, not only to threats to peace and security, but to genocide and other massive violations of human rights.

Nauru is pleased to see the rapid progression towards making the International Criminal Court operational since its Statute came into force in July 2001. We believe that the objectives of the Court make it a useful addition to the international tool kit for the preservation of peace, as perpetrators of atrocious acts in armed conflict have been put on notice that they will be held accountable for their acts or omissions.

Mr. Alexandre (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As a small island developing State in the Pacific Ocean, Nauru aligns itself with the statements of the leaders of the Pacific nations who have spoken before me on the concerns and challenges that we, the small-island-big-ocean developing States are facing, now and in the future. Nauru bears all the unique characteristics of a small island State, given our small size, in terms of both land area and population, our remoteness and our vulnerability to exogenous forces, be they man-made or natural.

In 1994, the world community agreed that small island developing States warranted special consideration with regard to their economic and social development because of the unique set of characteristics that are inherent in each island country, and it was to address those unique problems that the Barbados Plan of Action was created.

As His Royal Highness the Prime Minister of Tonga stated in his intervention, the road to sustainable development for small island developing States is posted with signs of undertakings, as we marched from Barbados in 1994 to New York in 1999 for the five-year review, then on to Monterrey in 2002 for the International Conference on Financing for Development, where more signs were posted saying that internal self-help, good governance and trade were the key to poverty alleviation, and that subscription to those cures would provide the way for developed countries to come in and help. Most, if not all, of the small island developing States have been taking this medicine for a long time, and we have yet to see the doctor. In Johannesburg, a whole chapter was devoted to the cause of the small island developing States. In April of this year, the Commission on Sustainable Development paved the way for an international meeting to be held in Mauritius in 2004.

Yet despite all these signs of good intentions, the reality is that, when small island developing States try to see that these decisions or undertakings are reflected in other international forums, our proposals in most cases are either rejected or rendered impotent after intense and difficult negotiations. The Cancún meeting is a good example, as is the recent meeting of Convention bodies such as the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in New Delhi in 2002, and the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Havana recently. This undesirable situation needs to be addressed if small island developing States are to benefit from the positive outcomes of international meetings or review conferences.

As we march towards Mauritius, small island developing States will have to endure due process in the Second Committee and at the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in order to establish administrative and financial norms for the international meeting. My delegation suspects that there will be many bumps and detours on the way, but our hope is that, at the end of the road, the outcome will focus on what needs to be done — when and by whom — to overcome impediments in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

It is not sufficient to rely solely on the Barbados Programme of Action to address all the development problems of small island developing States. To that end, Nauru sees the Millennium Development Goals as supplementing the Programme of Action by adding the human development dimension to the scope of issues that should be addressed and by offering partnership to drive the process.

However, for small island States like Nauru, the complex reporting requirement of the Goals is adding to the burden of reports that we are required to prepare, and therefore it is the considered view of my delegation that the United Nations Development Programme should tailor the questionnaire to suit a group of clients rather than use a one-size-fits-all approach. Assistance also should be provided to countries such as Nauru to collect and process the raw data required for the report.

Nauru, like other low-lying small island States, sees the Kyoto Protocol as its salvation from sea-level rise and climate change, which would devastate our already fragile ecological system, which is essential to our livelihood and culture. My delegation understands that the Russian Federation now stands between the Kyoto Protocol's coming into force and its continuing to languish. If that is the case, then Nauru calls on the Russian Federation to do what is universally right and just by ratifying the protocol before the meeting of the Ninth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Italy in December this year.

A healthy Pacific Ocean and the sustainable use of its natural resources, including highly migratory fish stocks, are also critical to our livelihood. We in the Pacific have walked the talk on these issues through the development of an ocean policy to guide us in the management of our part of the Pacific Ocean and to form the framework for future regional ocean-related initiatives.

Secondly, we have adopted a Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, which provides a comprehensive regime for the management of the region's highly migratory fish stocks, both in our exclusive economic zone and in the high seas.

The trans-shipment of nuclear waste through our waters is of great concern to many island countries because of the damage it could cause.

My delegation has stated during previous debates that it agrees fully with the proposal to reform the Security Council to bring it into tune with the realities of today's world order. We are disappointed that, after 10 years of debate, there is still no convergence of views between the two camps on how to move forward.

To try to address the expansion along with the question of the veto would be like riding a dead horse — we would not go anywhere, which is exactly the situation we are in.

Furthermore, my delegation believes that we have done all we can do at the representative level, and that the only way we can make progress is to take it to a higher level, so that our political leaders can review what we have done and make a decision on how to move forward.

On the question of reforms to operational policies and administrative structures, including budgetary aspects of the United Nations, my delegation fully supports the actions taken by the Secretary-General in this regard, but it appears that much more has to be done. The areas of review have to be enlarged and intensified, if indeed the prediction that the regular budget is going to exceed the $3 billion mark is correct.

Finally, concerning reform, my delegation fully supports the view expressed by Australia that the group system needs modernization. Most of the Pacific small island countries are buried in the Asian group, which extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Suez Canal, while our big brothers, Australia and New Zealand, are "Others" in the Western European group. Outside the United Nations system, the Pacific is usually grouped with East Asia, in both economic and geopolitical zoning. We see no reason why this cannot be the case

at the United Nations, considering that the divide between Eastern and Western Europe will become meaningless as the two converge.

Nauru, because of biased and incorrect media reports over the last five years, now carries a stigma as a haven for money-laundering through offshore banks registered in Nauru. There have also been reports that our Citizen Investment Programme is aiding and abetting criminals and terrorists, allowing them free movement by making possible the acquisition of Nauruan passports.

The reluctance of foreign authorities to provide proof of allegations of criminal activities by banks registered in Nauru prevented the Government from initiating the mechanism provided for in our legislation to release information on offshore banks to foreign authorities. This has put us on a collision course.

Nauru was not surprised when, in 2000, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) listed it along with others as a non-cooperating country. The following year, Nauru's status was further downgraded, and it was put on the list for "countermeasures" by members of FATF, not because our laws were insufficient, but because the goalposts were shifted and our failure involved a lack of capacity and capability to supervise the offshore banks registered in Nauru.

In December 2002, the United States Government, in taking up FATF's call to apply countermeasures against Nauru, announced that Nauru would be designated a "money-laundering" country under the provisions of the Patriotic Act. The highest level of sanctions would be applied, which would prohibit all commercial and financial transactions between any Nauru-registered financial institution and the United States. In May 2003 Nauru was accordingly informed and was given 30 days to show cause as to why the sanction should not be applied.

Nauru submitted its comments, passed new laws in March of this year repealing the registration of offshore banks, and included a sunset clause terminating the licenses that would come into effect 30 to 180 days — as the case may be — from 27 March 2003, when the law came into force. The Government has also suspended the Citizen Investment Programme while it reviews the law, in order to address the concerns expressed by the United States Department of State.

A new anti-money-laundering law was passed in March, and work is in progress on omnibus legislation that would address the financing of terrorism, transnational organized crime and money-laundering. Nauru also signed an article 98 agreement with the United States.

In the process, Nauru has lost close to $2 million, if not more, in revenue, which is a drop in the ocean to OECD members but real money to us, considering that it is equivalent to 5 per cent of the Government's annual budget. We are now waiting to learn our fate — awaiting the judgement of the United States and the FATF, as the two are interlinked.

To conclude, Nauru, small as it is, believes that power consists in a nation's capacity to link its will with the purpose of others, to lead by reason and give the gift of cooperation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis, chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): It gives me profound pleasure to welcome and congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte in regard to the lofty position that he now holds. It was not long ago that he was fighting alongside the ambassadors of the Latin American and Caribbean Group. He represents the smallest country that has ever ascended to the presidency, and, for his Caribbean colleagues, there will be additional rejoicing when his photograph appears on the Wall of Presidents. It is my hope that our younger diplomats will endeavour to emulate him and continue to demonstrate the mettle of small island developing States. But let me also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the able and skilful manner in which he conducted our deliberations during the fifty-seventh session. The Secretary-General and his staff must also receive acclaim for their diligence and steadfast work. We mourn and grieve for the United Nations staff members killed and wounded in Baghdad, and, indeed, for all members of the staff who have made the ultimate sacrifice in upholding the ideals of the United Nations.

We have often repeated statistics on human living conditions, but it seems to be just a recitation. Nonetheless, in the hope that this year figures may move those in control to make a meaningful attempt at

remedies, let me join the list of other colleagues who have recalled the fact that almost half of the world's population subsists on less than $2 a day, and a fifth lives on less than $1 a day. The point to be stressed is that global inequality has increased. The digital divide is widening, the number of refugees and displaced persons has grown, and the AIDS crisis is devastating numerous societies.

What tends to be ignored is what developing countries have been doing for themselves. In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries have come to each other's assistance in times of crisis, whether there be natural devastation by way of earthquakes, volcanic eruption, drought or floods. We have used our military forces positively, to rescue, to stabilize and to rehabilitate, when suffering the vicissitudes of nature. Strapped as we are in regard to finances, we have assisted one another in regard to the severest of economic constraints. If an unbiased evaluation is made, it will be clear that average gains in human development in low- and middle-income countries have been substantial and higher than gains in income. Life expectancy has increased by 59 per cent, and illiteracy has been reduced from 39 per cent in 1970 to 25 per cent at the turn of the century.

Nevertheless, current development trends are not sustainable and are placing extreme pressure on the environment and on the impoverished, who bear the overwhelming brunt of environmental degradation. Our coastal systems are threatened, dominant countries are fishing indiscriminately within our exclusive economic zones, and our coral reefs have not only been damaged but are disappearing. Yet aid has declined as a share of gross national product, and World Bank research indicates that, without a doubling of development assistance, the endorsed Millennium Goals are unlikely to be achieved.

Development experts appear to have a single focus. We fully accept the necessity for market reforms, but they are insufficient in themselves. There is a need for broad social reforms. Equitable income distribution and secondary school enrolment have been found to be insensitive to growth, while air quality has been negatively correlated to growth. The global institutions continue to listen to their identified experts and to disregard local experience, whether from the aged and wise or from the young and brilliant. Sustained development requires a significant percentage of domestic or local ownership.

Our religious literature states that continuing a lifestyle demands the depositing or planting of seeds, from which, in a relatively short period of time, comes new life and the continuance of organic existence. With that in mind, it is imperative that development strategies clearly take into consideration those who will succeed us, and Antigua and Barbuda, which devotes much attention and planning to the advancement of its youth, is advocating continued global focus on this issue in order to ensure a more harmonious international atmosphere than the one in which we carry out our activities.

With that in mind, Caribbean heads of State and Government have met with representatives of the World Bank and are jointly in the process of, first, identifying the risk and protective factors and determinants of youth behaviours and development; secondly, demonstrating that the negative behaviours of young people are costly not only to themselves but also to society as a whole; and, thirdly, identifying key intervention points for youth development, underscoring identified risk and protective factors.

Presently, as a result of this joint thrust, we are targeting sexual and physical abuse, HIV/AIDS as linked to misguided values about sexuality, the incidence of rage, youth unemployment, and social misconceptions as to the use of alcohol and marijuana. Moving forward requires modernizing the educational system and maximizing the protective effect of schools, upgrading public health-care systems, making families a top policy issue, and strengthening community and neighbourhood support to adolescents.

Antigua and Barbuda believes that, whereas aid is sorely needed, its effectiveness will be limited unless a level playing field is provided in regard to trade and investment in developing societies. There cannot be meaningful progress by talking about the relative significance and importance of free trade. We listen and see the dominant countries employ various and diverse forms of agricultural protectionism, while taking away from former colonies of exploitation vital preferences needed to keep their products on the market. Why should globalization be oppressive to the pusillanimous? We have been listening to the modifications of the philosophies of Cobden and Bright, but are feeling the yoke of global practices, knowing that never in modern history has there ever been free trade.

The fears of developing countries in regard to the practices and realities of globalization, as opposed to its often-vaunted philosophy, were manifested at Cancún in September of this year. Cancún, we have been made to understand, means snake pit in the local Mayan language, and our hope is that there will be some meaningful effort to overcome the drawbacks. Developing countries will be hindered from developing themselves if lip service alone continues to be paid to poverty. The first step in the elimination of poverty is to adequately recognize the multifunctional role of agriculture. This multifunctional role incorporates food safety, animal welfare and the preservation of land. Unfortunately, Cancún proved once again that the dominant countries would continue to exempt themselves from the rules governing free trade and to domestically provide substantive subsidies to their farmers, while denying the former colonies of exploitation the right to preferences.

The year 2004 will mark the tenth anniversary of the first United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados in 1994. In looking back at the almost 10 years since that Conference, we hold these following truths to be self evident: In the Barbados Programme's attention on the unique circumstances of small island developing States, the corresponding actions to address these circumstances by the international community, has been lacking. This is the opportunity presented by the international meeting, to review the implementation of the Programme of Action that will be held in Mauritius in August 2004. It presents us with a second chance to identify a set of concrete actions which will be needed to further the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and thereby regain the momentum lost by small island developing States in their quest for sustainable development. So far we have not been satisfied that problems relating to the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through our waters, bilging and fishing indiscriminately in our Exclusive Economic Zones have been given any meaningful consideration.

My Government welcomes the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, having recently deposited our instruments of ratification for both the Protocol and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. As a Party to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we wish to lend our support to the call made by the Foreign Minister of Japan for parties to the Climate Change Convention to maintain the international momentum for climate change negotiations, for the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and for the formulation of common rules that will facilitate participation by all countries.

The Millennium Development Goals constitute an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives. The challenge to implement them is enormous. A case in point is the target of halving by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. To meet this target, the world will need to connect approximately 200,000 people to clean water and 400,000 people to improved sanitation each day.

That will require three things: first, innovative financing mechanisms to assure the necessary doubling in financial flows to developing countries for water and sanitation, from current spending of $10 billion each year, to about $20 billion a year; secondly, greatly improved governance of scarce water resources, built around holistic, integrated water resources management strategies that encompass priorities from drinking to agriculture and industrial development; and thirdly, a clear focus on building capacity where it is needed most: working directly with local communities, especially women, to help craft and implement their own solutions. And this is just for water.

We see, as the dominant Powers repeat their call for universal democracy, that the former colonies of exploitation must remind them that democracy is most difficult to achieve among those witnessing the tears and the conditions of hungry children. Democracy struggles to maintain itself among those who are racked with illnesses and weak from the lack of adequate nutrition. Democracy is practically a utopian ideal, in which there are defined class divisions and insurmountable social barriers. For democracy to thrive and prosper, all sectors of the society have to participate fully with regard to economic growth and an adequate distribution of income. It is, therefore, incumbent that society work toward integral, equitable and sustainable social and economic development. In Antigua and Barbuda, in the midst of our trials and tribulations, we have maintained democracy, and it is a hallmark of our existence.

The products of science, technology and innovation have to be harnessed and designed to add value to the real components of development. Wealth must be generated in order to raise the dignity and the esteem of mankind, and to garner respect for the internationally recognized fundamental rights and principles of labour. Without such, socio-economic development and, consequently, the full enjoyment of democracy will be held in abeyance.

My country is at a loss to fully comprehend why some of the major countries of this world oppose the International Criminal Court (ICC). It is vital to our security and development. The Court represents a revolution in legal and moral attitudes toward some of the worst crimes on Earth. Whereas many developing States have suffered under the yoke of globalization, the ICC represents a plus for the globalization process, its principles of justice and the rule of law in international affairs. The Rome Statute has sufficient checks and balances to allay all fears, and we remain convinced that the ICC will be a legitimate judicial institution to adequately judge individuals for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. We reiterate that this can be done while guaranteeing States their rights, as they are protected from any interference by the Court if they pursue the given crimes at the national level, and that the prosecutor's autonomous power is accompanied by guarantees against using the Court for specious or politically motivated endeavours.

The Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean look to Caribbean members of the Special Committee on Decolonization, more commonly known as the Special Committee of 24, to give guidance in regard to their constitutional evolution. This year there was a breakthrough in Anguilla, as the United Kingdom agreed to have the regional seminar held in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and for the first time the United Nations Secretariat agreed to write directly to the local representatives, rather than through the representatives of the administering Powers. But more importantly, the United Kingdom sent a senior official from the Commonwealth and Overseas Office, who was to gain the respect of the seminar participants.

The Non-Self-Governing Territories greeted this development, and all sent delegations that were vocal and explained that their options had never been explained to them. They were eager to remain in touch with the United Nations Secretariat, and sought to take advantage of whatever experiences, educational and otherwise, the United Nations could provide. In an atmosphere of cordiality, the administrating Power and the non-self-governing territories expressed ways and means of promoting development and advancement for the territories. Quite significantly the non-self-governing territories hailed the new policy of the United Kingdom for consultation with the elected officials of its territories on the appointment of governors.

My country would not like to give the impression that we are only concerned with development, as this would be far from the truth. We are cognizant of other global issues, particularly with reference to peace and security. The images that are constantly before us with reference to Iraq and the Middle East leave us questioning the brotherhood of mankind. The United Nations has to be unified with reference to the rehabilitation of Iraq, and the transition of its administrative structures into the hands of its nationals.

We subsequently give our support for the peace process in the Middle East, based on the respective resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council. Likewise, we give wholehearted support to the preservation of the role of the United Nations and other organizations in working toward the stabilization and security of Afghanistan.

In the same vein, we support and encourage the efforts made to resolve the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the stabilization of peace in parts of West Africa and the Balkans.

We continue to press for the revitalization of the disarmament process, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and general arms control.

These are indeed perilous times, and, when an event occurs in a distant part of the globe that can drastically affect us domestically, total disregard of the need for tolerance will not only produce resentment but also the dangerous practice of intolerance. For such times it is far better to remember the words of Thomas Paine, who stated that "The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Clifford Mamba, chairman of the delegation of Swaziland.

Mr. Mamba (Swaziland): It is an honour and privilege for me to present my country's statement as

commanded by His Majesty King Mswati III and on his behalf. Allow me to convey the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III and Her Majesty the Indlovukazi and indeed the entire Swazi nation.

We are gathered here to chart the way forward towards the creation of a world fit for all of us by the turn of the century and beyond. Over the past year, we witnessed dramatic events that brought old and new issues to the forefront. The international situation has relapsed into the old state of uncertainty. International leadership, be it on the part of the major Powers or the United Nations, has become vague, as confrontations at the interstate and intra-state levels have increased. Our inability to stand collectively against many issues that afflict each individual country differently has been cited by our detractors as marking the beginning of the end of the Organization and multilateralism.

The United Nations needs to send a clear message to its detractors that it is alive and well, and that it will indeed play a major role in the post-cold war era. All must know that the United Nations is a major forum for consultation, coordination and collective decisions on crucial socio-political issues among its Members and that its strength and relevance has never come from affirming the designs of a few selected Member nations, but instead rests on the collective will of the international community that emerges from a multilateral process.

In our interdependent world, the need to strengthen the multilateral process is now more urgent than ever before, if we are to achieve our common goal of a just and humane international order based on international cooperation and solidarity. This is a challenge that must be squarely and urgently addressed, and remedial action must be taken here at the United Nations. We can stand tall and proud, knowing that two years ago, the response by the United Nations to a new and unprecedented level of terrorism was immediate, united and effective. That response was a model for international unity of purpose and multilateral action; it was a lesson that should not be forgotten as the Organization tackles other problems confronting humanity.

At this point, allow me to pay tribute to Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to the other United Nations staff and support staff who lost their lives in the terrible tragedy in Baghdad a few weeks ago. Once more, terrorism has shown its ugly face — indeed its only face — and how important it is to support the United Nations efforts to deal with it.

Despite the best intentions and efforts of regional organizations and the United Nations, a scourge of a different nature continues to threaten many parts of the world. I refer here to the threat of internal and inter-State conflicts around the world. Events in some parts of the world continue to be of grave concern to us all. People and countries continue to expend valuable energy and resources in fighting each other. The international community has a responsibility, not only to design appropriate strategies for a measured and early response, but also to find ways and means of addressing those conflicts' root cause and managing them to a peaceful resolution.

There are positive indications that political conflict and turmoil in Africa will be eliminated, and there is hope for building stability and economic progress. In the face of dwindling official development assistance and the lack of comparable resources, the creation of the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme are commendable initiatives to bring Africa closer to the mainstream of international development, to generate sustainable economic growth and to eradicate poverty and the spread of disease.

What is needed now are resources and we ask that every effort be made by our developed partners to ensure that these initiatives achieve a breakthrough for African development. Also, the international community should concentrate its efforts toward making development more inclusive and must ensure that particular groups of vulnerable countries, in particular small developing States, are not left out of the global economy and the development process.

With the ongoing revitalization of the General Assembly and its integrated implementation and follow-up to the outcome of major United Nations conferences and summits, we are hopeful that the aspirations of our countries for sustainable development and peace will be met.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be a matter of great concern. We urge both parties to renew their commitment to the road map for peace and to agree on a mechanism for achieving a lasting peace. We are pleased to note that a significant level of

consensus on the main elements of a settlement has emerged. We further urge both parties to take advantage of this and proceed towards negotiations involving the leadership of Palestine and Israel.

It is regrettable that the threat of a nuclear holocaust still haunts us — even to this day — owing to the inability of the international community to work out a regime for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty we have made significant gains on the issue of nuclear disarmament, but these alone cannot eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to hold the view that the international community must effectively address this matter in order to establish a clear timetable to which all nuclear Powers must commit.

In addition to the struggle to outlaw weapons of mass destruction, there is an urgent need to address the issue of small arms and light weapons, which have contributed to conflict and insecurity in many of our countries. Their easy accessibility, fuelled by illicit brokering, is a major cause for concern. We appeal to all countries to fully implement the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held here in New York in 2001, with a view to combating such practices.

Economic growth is essential if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the first goal of eradicating poverty. In our quest to develop quietly and peacefully, according to the wishes of the Swazi nation, His Majesty King Mswati III launched, in June this year, the country's first draft constitution — a document that has been hailed by many as a good framework for shaping a new Swaziland. The Constitutional Drafting Committee has taken the draft to the people for their input, and it is our hope that it will be finalized and adopted soon. We are grateful to our international partners for providing support throughout that exercise.

Despite our best efforts, however, the Kingdom of Swaziland is finding it difficult to achieve progress because of the huge obstacles that we face, the greatest of these being the threat to our future by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Its devastating impact on Swaziland has been well documented. No development sector is immune from the consequences of the very high and increasing HIV infection rate among our people, given the enormous strain that it places on our financial and human resources. We are grateful, however, to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and hopes are now high. Notwithstanding the inherent delays in processing our applications to the Fund, the arrival of the first disbursements from the Fund in August has increased hope for thousands among the affected and infected population.

We are now able to embrace the approved medical-care strategies, including the reduction of mother-to-child transmission of the virus and the prescription of antiretroviral drugs for those who need them. The recent high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, which was held here last week, was of critical importance to Swaziland. We are positive that the conclusions reached during that meeting will be critical in our endeavour to find solutions to this pandemic.

As part of His Majesty's initiative to promote global awareness of the pandemic and to raise funds that will help those of our countries that are suffering from the dreadful consequences of the disease, the much awaited album by international artists, entitled "Songs for Life", was launched by His Majesty here at the United Nations, in Washington and in Los Angeles in June this year. We look forward with great confidence to the success of the album, whose proceeds will go entirely to HIV/AIDS programmes.

The food security situation that continues to affect the Southern African region is closely linked to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Kingdom of Swaziland has been hard hit by food shortages, largely due to the failure of the rains, particularly in the rural areas, where communities are entirely dependent on farming. As food shortages grip us tighter, we are grateful to the United Nations and its affiliated agencies for their effort to help us to arrest the crisis. As we approach this farming season, it is our prayer that the situation will improve.

It could be safely said that the twenty-first century has had an inauspicious start, with globalization, terrorism, disease and weapons of mass destruction at the forefront of our minds. This places all the more responsibility on the United Nations to harness the resources and commitment of its Members for the benefit of humankind. In this effort, there is a compelling need to include all the peoples of the world,

as envisaged by our founding fathers and as enshrined in the principle of universality. Acknowledging the importance of this principle, the Kingdom of Swaziland raises the issue of the inclusion once more of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations and its associated agencies. Our principled position on this important issue remains unchanged.

The Republic of China on Taiwan has shown time and again its willingness to participate in efforts to bring about true global peace, development and security, as well as its commitment to utilize resources for the benefit of mankind. We therefore fail to understand why the people of Taiwan cannot be part of this great family of nations.

Finally, I would like to thank the President of the Assembly for giving me this opportunity to speak before the Assembly. The Kingdom of Swaziland reiterates its conviction that the United Nations system remains the best guarantee for international peace and security. We pledge to work vigorously with the Organization to ensure its success.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.